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The Influence of  
Madame de Staël on Sainte-Beuve

Romance Languages

A. M.

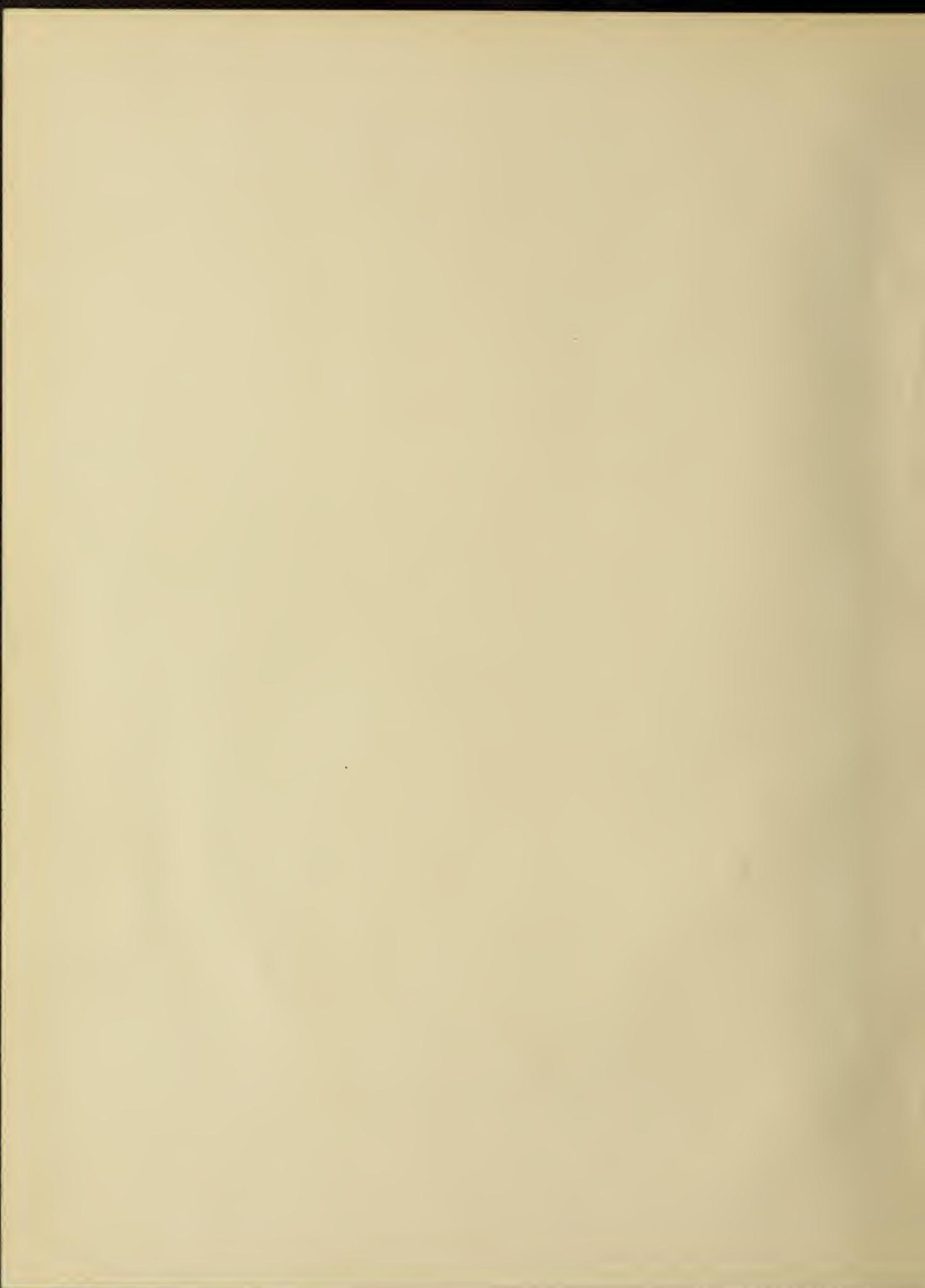
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THE INFLUENCE OF MADAME DE STAËL  
ON SAINTE-BEUVE

BY

JAMES KESSLER

A. B. University of Indiana, 1908

THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

IN ROMANCE LANGUAGES

IN

THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
OF THE  
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

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June 2, 1915

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VISION BY James Kessler

ENTITLED The Influence of Madame de Staél on  
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DEGREE OF Master of Arts

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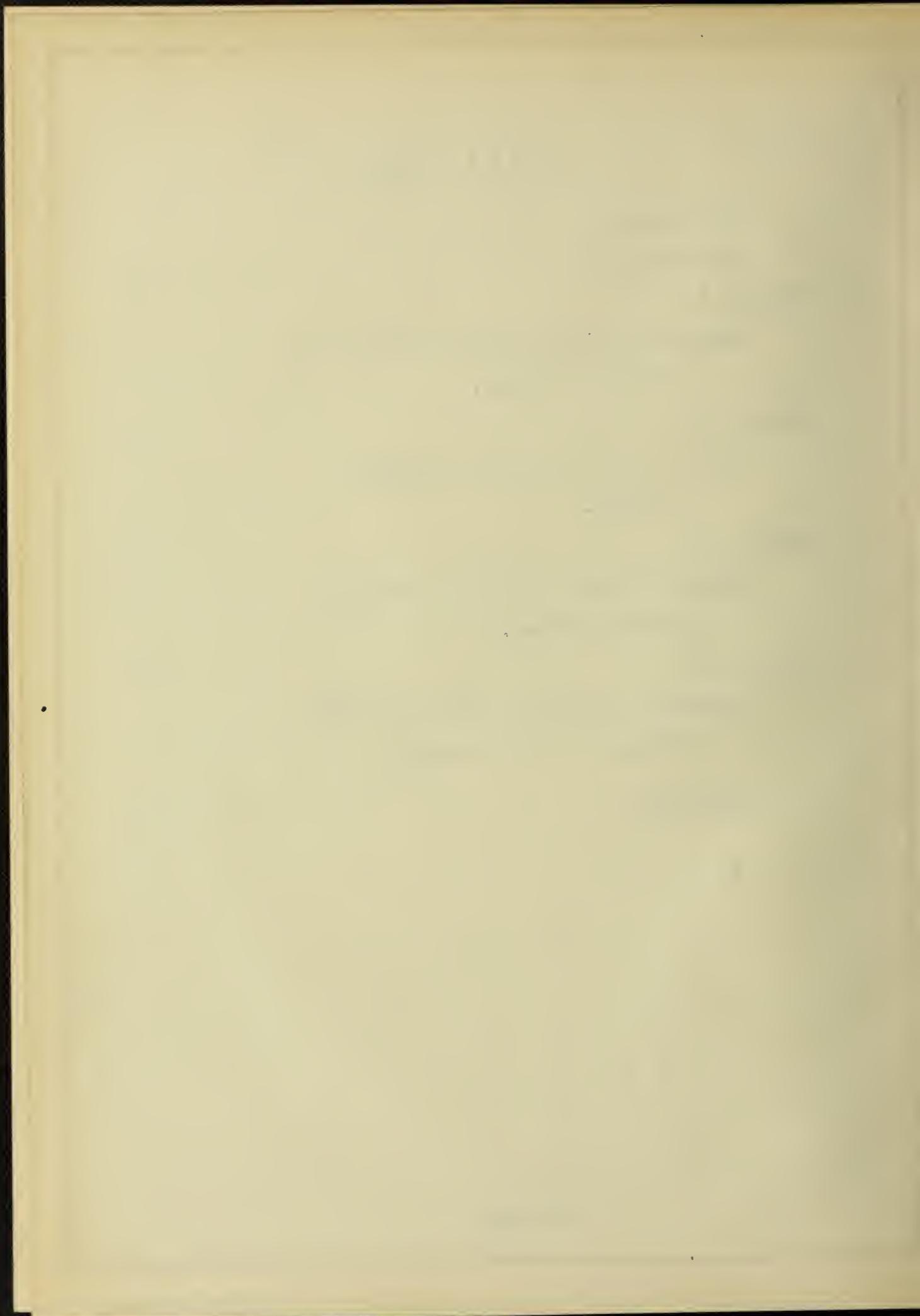


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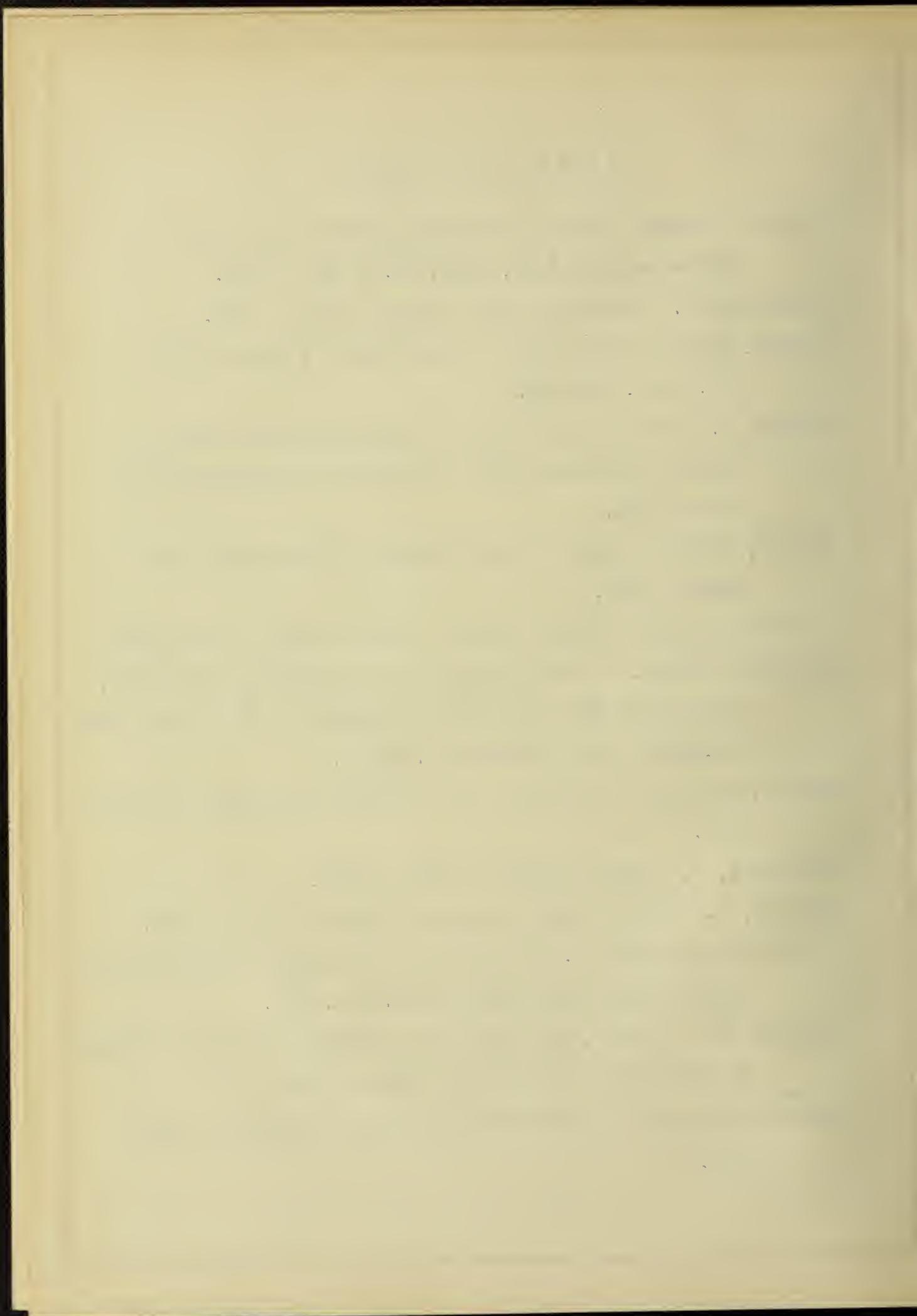
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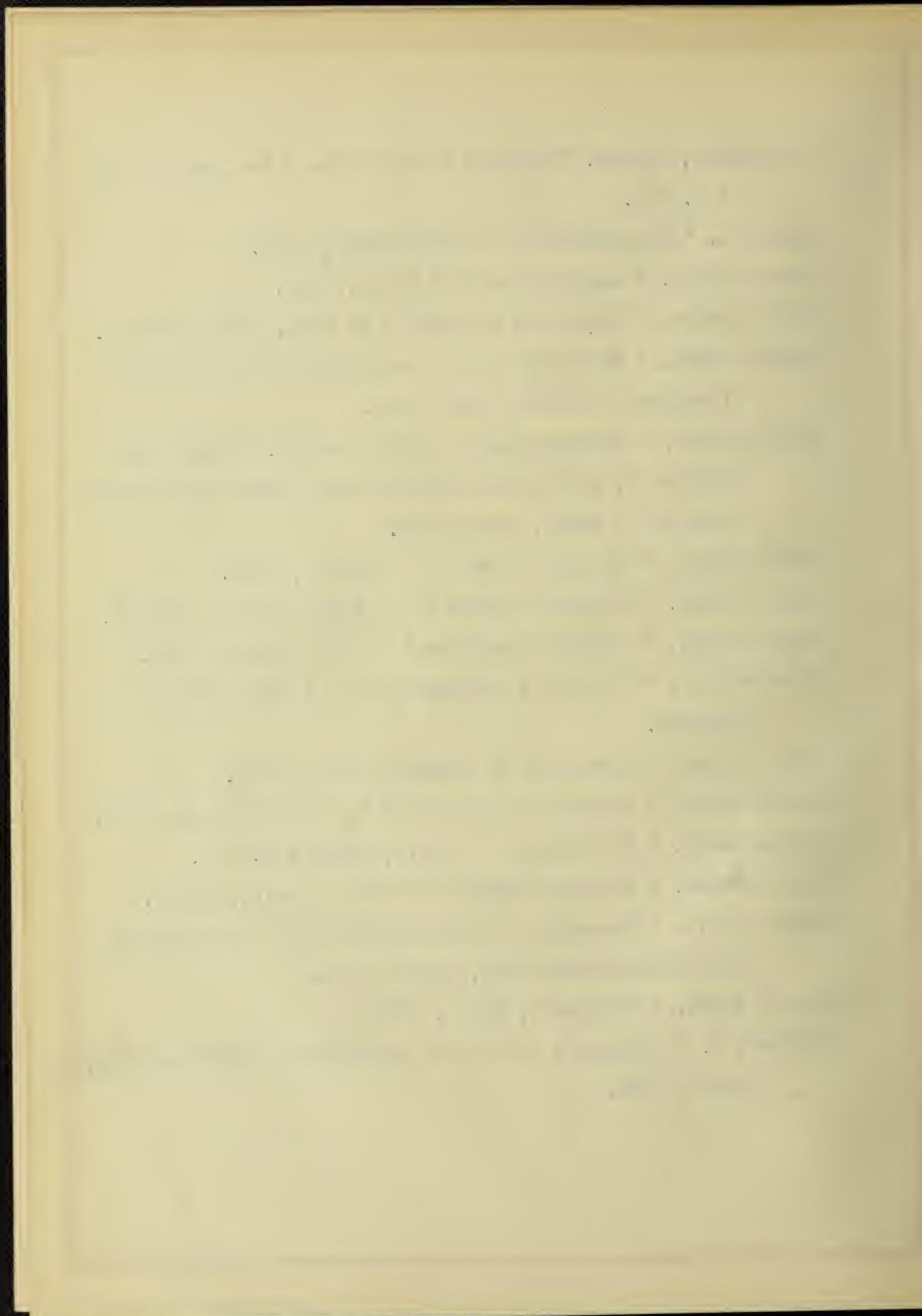
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THE INFLUENCE OF MADAME DE STAËL  
ON SAINTE-BEUVÉ

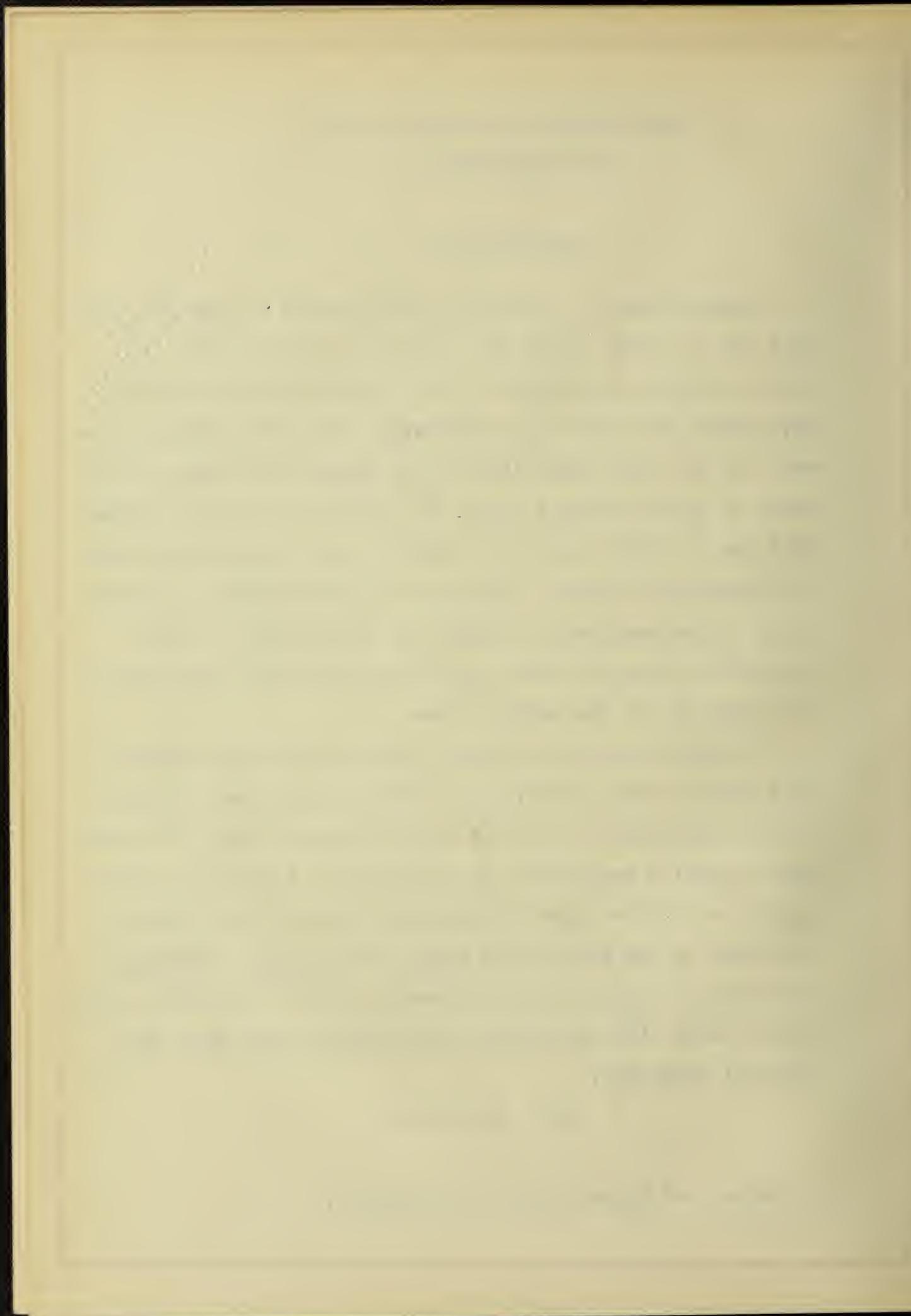
Introduction

"Sainte-Beuve... had such a predilection for Mme de Staël that she has been called the *heroïne* of the *Lundis*.<sup>1</sup>" The desire to test the justice of this epigram which is cited by Mr. Babbitt has led to the following study. The investigation made has not been restricted to the *Lundis*, but takes in the whole of Sainte-Beuve's works. The object in view is to show that Mme de Staël exerted an influence over Sainte-Beuve and to indicate the general character of this influence. Further study is contemplated, in which the details will be more carefully worked out and a close and systematic comparison of the works of the two authors made.

No detailed study of their life and works is presented; only such of their theories and ideas as may seem pertinent to the discussion are introduced. The general plan is to show: Mme de Staël's importance and influence as a literary critic in France; Sainte-Beuve's connection with her; her indirect influence on him through the *Globe*, the *Cénacle*, *Villemain*; evidences of a more direct influence exerted through the study of her works; the conclusions which may be drawn from the material presented.

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1. *Masters of Modern French Criticism*, I7.



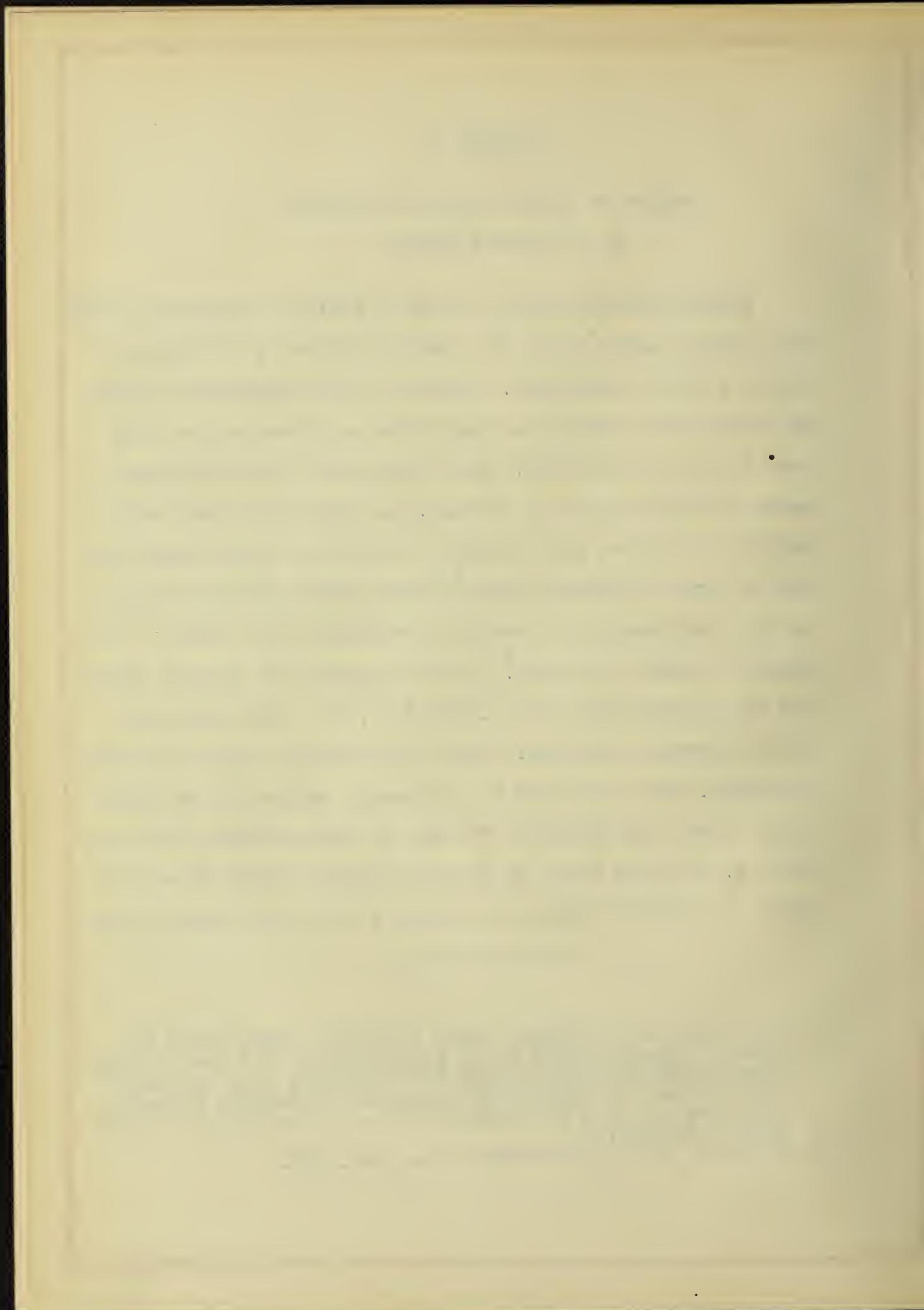
## CHAPTER I

Madame de Staël's General Influence  
as a Literary Critic

Before discussing Mme de Staël's influence on Sainte-Beuve, her general influence in the field of literary criticism in France will be considered. The men of the eighteenth century in France were probably as eager for new ideas as has ever been the case in history; these ideas were sought anywhere, among foreign nations or at home. One might then very well ask why literature and literary conceptions should remain in such a formal hidebound state.<sup>1</sup> Lanson cites three obstacles to the developement of French literature at this time : " le monde, le goût, la langue."<sup>2</sup> The literature of society demanded the suppression of the individual, his enthusiasm, any sincere personal emotion. Taste was fixed by certain traditional rules. These admitted no sentiment, imposed fixed, immutable forms, and compelled the use of models determined once for all. Of these rules in the eighteenth century Brunetière says: " Au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle on discutait bien sur l'application

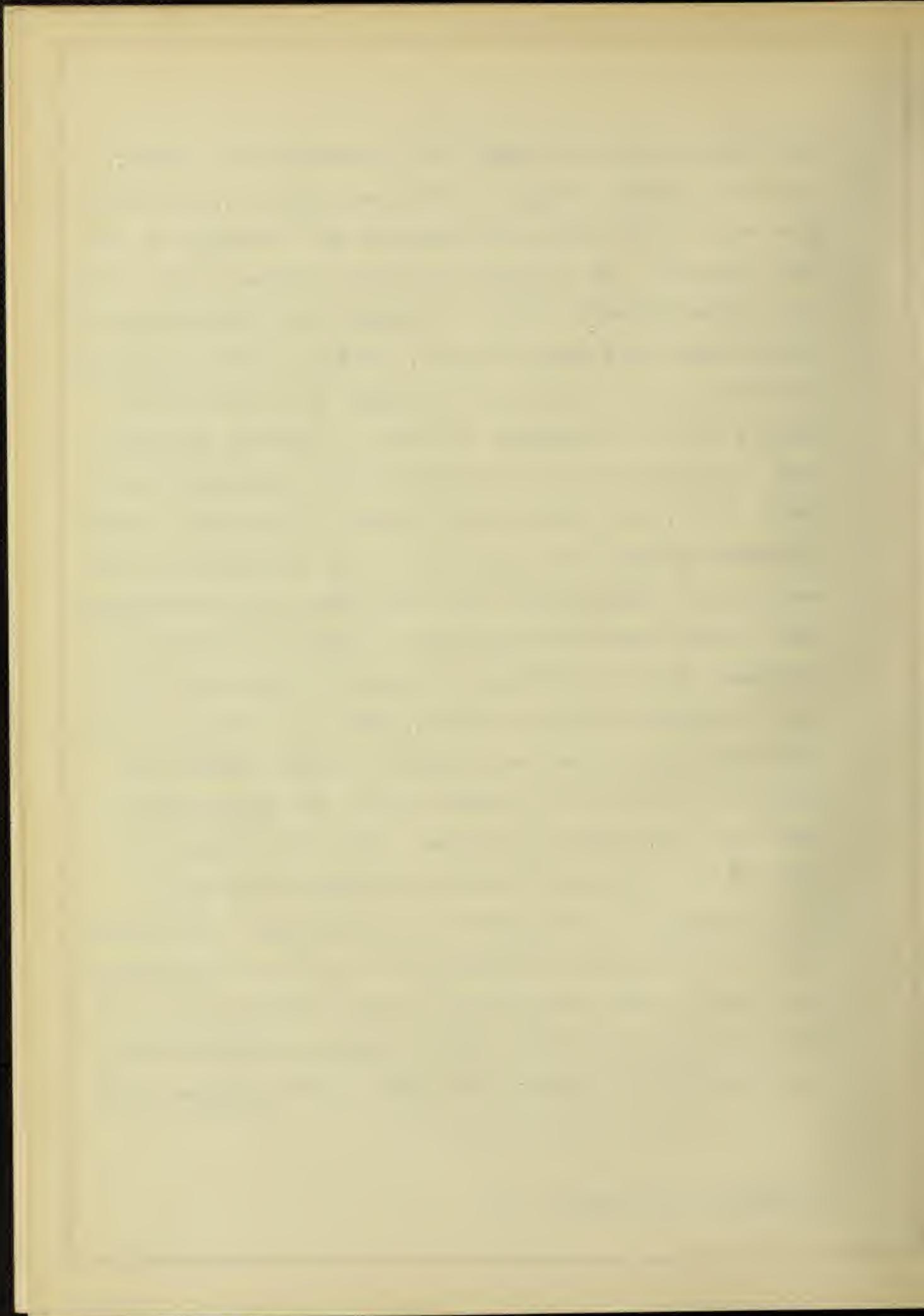
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1. Cf. Vitet in the *Globe*, April 2 and 23, 1825, cited by Michaut, *Sainte-Beuve avant les Lundis*,<sup>85</sup> : " Les philosophes du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle ont tout attaqué, sauf les lois littéraires; la Révolution a apporté toutes les libertés, sauf les libertés littéraires; le goût, en France, attend son 14 Juillet."
2. *Histoire de la littérature française*, 839.



des règles, ou sur la formule qu'il convenait d'en donner, mais on ne doutait pas qu'il y eût des règles, et, puisqu'il y en avait, on ne doutait pas non plus que l'autorité en dût être absolue.<sup>1</sup>" The language had become a system of signs for the representation of ideas; it was poor in figurative expressions drawn from concrete objects, and had no emotional appeal. So to bring about a literary renascence, the literature of society had to be abandoned in favor of a greater individualism, the rules had to be abrogated and the language changed. Mme de Staël, as an admirer and follower of Rousseau, naturally reacted against the suppression of the individual, of his emotions, his enthusiasms; this first impression was strengthened and supplemented by her study of German literature and the German people. She found in Germany a people and a literature individualistic, not social. Here were sincere emotion, enthusiasm; each person was trying to develope himself and mocked at the restrictions which society was endeavoring to force upon him. This side of German life attracted her, enthralled her; she named the fourth division of her work, de l'Allemagne, " la religion de l'enthousiasme." She further says : " La littérature du Nord est la seule qui soit susceptible encore d'être perfectionnée, parce qu'ayant ses racines dans notre propre sol, elle est la seule qui puisse croître et se vivifier de nouveau; elle exprime notre religion; elle

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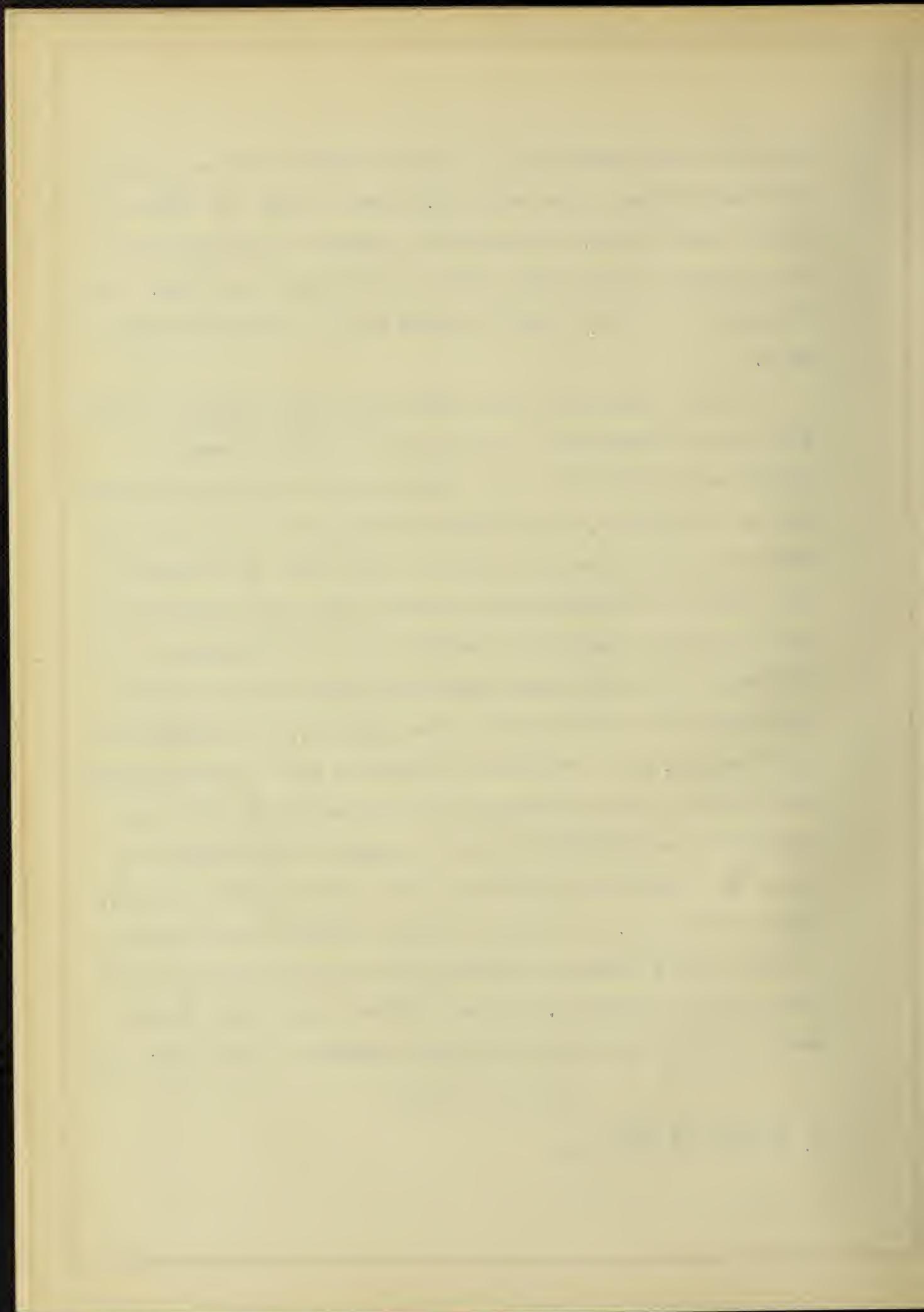


rappelle notre histoire....; elle se sert de nos impressions personnelles pour nous émouvoir.<sup>1</sup>" Here we have the ideas of French romanticism, its aesthetic interest in Christianity, its historic restitutions, and its individual lyricism. Here literature is freed from its bonds as a " littérature mondaine ".

At the beginning of her work, de la Littérature, we find this sort of manifesto : " Je me suis proposé d'examiner quelle est l'influence de la religion, des moeurs et des lois, sur la littérature, et quelle est l'influence de la littérature sur la religion, les moeurs et les lois. Il me semble que l'on n'a pas suffisamment analysé les causes morales et politiques, qui modifient l'esprit de la littérature.... En observant les différences caractéristiques qui se trouvent entre les écrits des Italiens, des Anglais, des Allemands et des Français, j'ai cru pouvoir démontrer que les institutions politiques et religieuses avaient la plus grande part à ces diversités constantes.<sup>2</sup>" In this statement of her purpose appears the idea that literature is the expression of society. Before this time, a literary work was usually considered as a thing apart, having no connection with its origins or with surrounding influences. The only method open to the critic was to compare the work with other examples of its type; this

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1. Oeuvres X, 276.
2. Oeuvres IV, 25, 26.



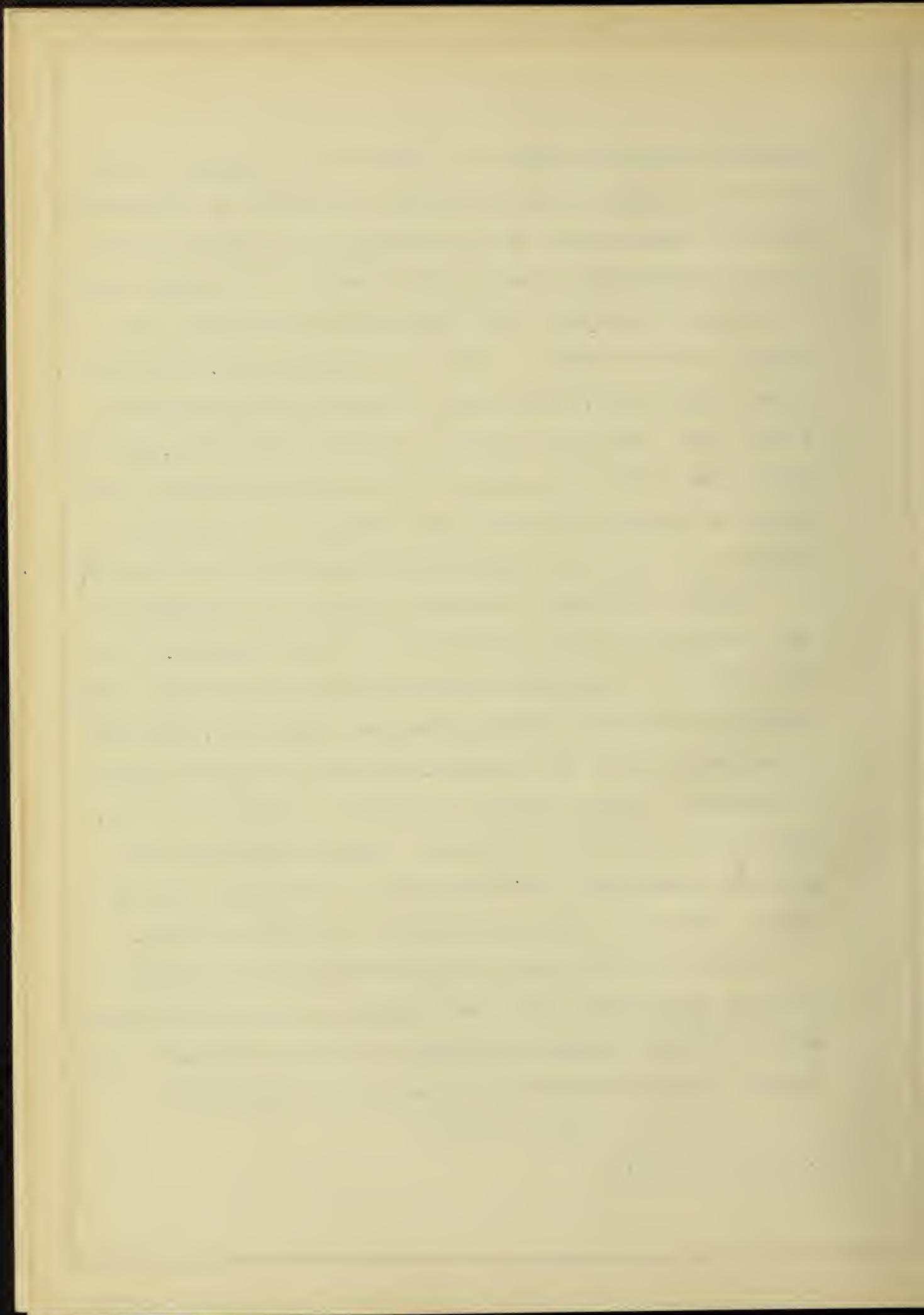
process inevitably leads to the idea of a set genre, so that the work is judged from an absolute view-point. If the critic, however, takes account of surrounding influences, the fixed type is immediately rejected and the work must be judged from a relative view-point. With this relative view-point introduced, no set standard of rules can be maintained. The traditional conclusions, based upon the rules, can no longer be valid, since the critic now has a different criterion. Mme de Staël says in this connection: " Il se pourrait qu'une littérature ne fût pas conforme à notre législation et qu'elle contînt des idées nouvelles dont nous puissions nous enrichir."<sup>1</sup>

Another one of Mme de Staël's ideas is an outgrowth of the idea that literature is the expression of society. It is the doctrine of perfectibility as applied to literature. Since society is advancing toward perfection, literature, its mode of expression, must also advance. So Roman literature should be superior to Greek, modern literature to Roman literature. Medieval literature must also have its place in this chain of development, and this indication of a fruitful field of literary study is a real contribution to critical theory.

Mme de Staël mentions, in her statement of the purpose of de la Littérature, that she is going to study the writings of the Italians, Germans, and English as well as those of the French. Her idea of the study of a foreign literature is

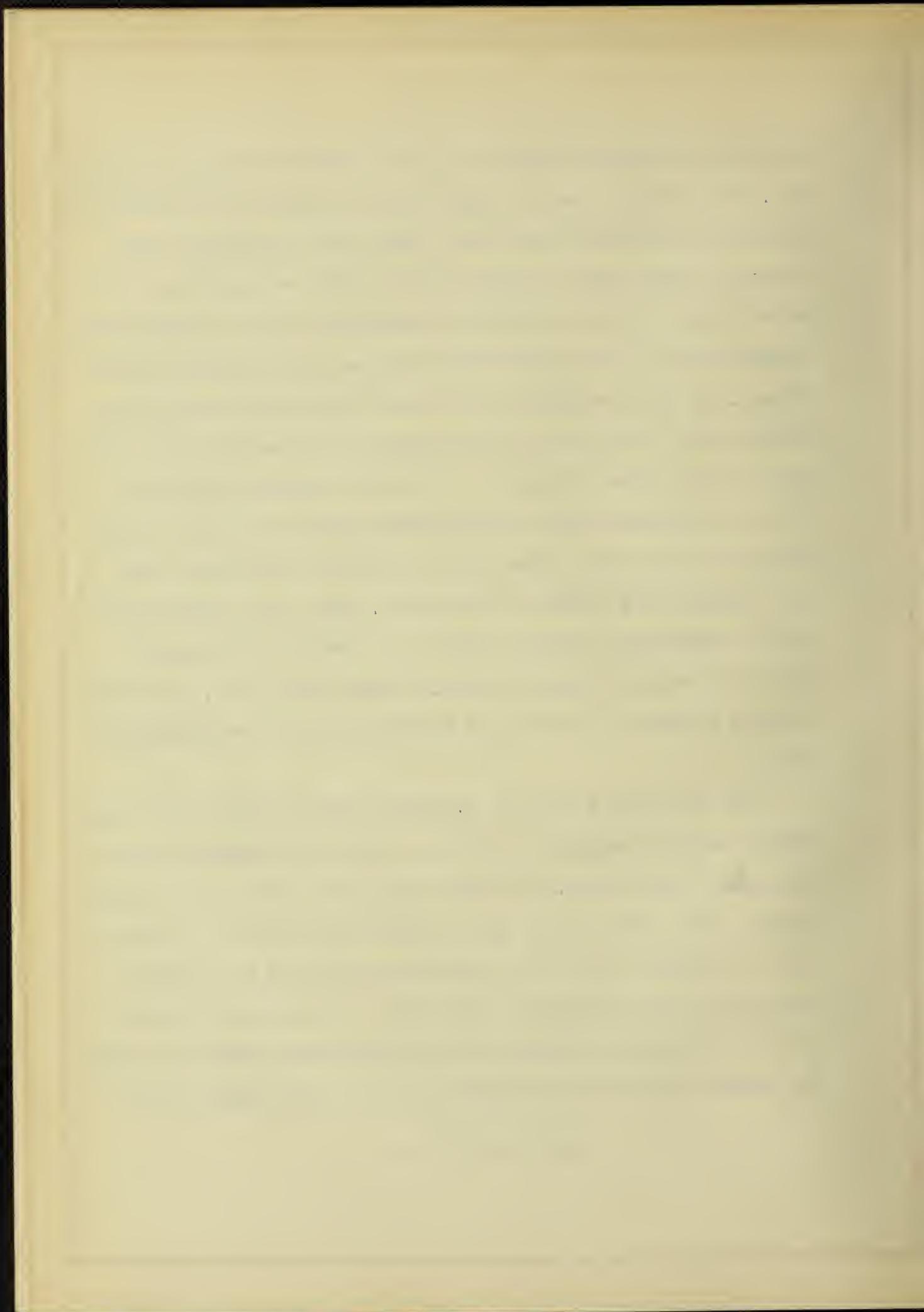
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I. Oeuvres X, 22.



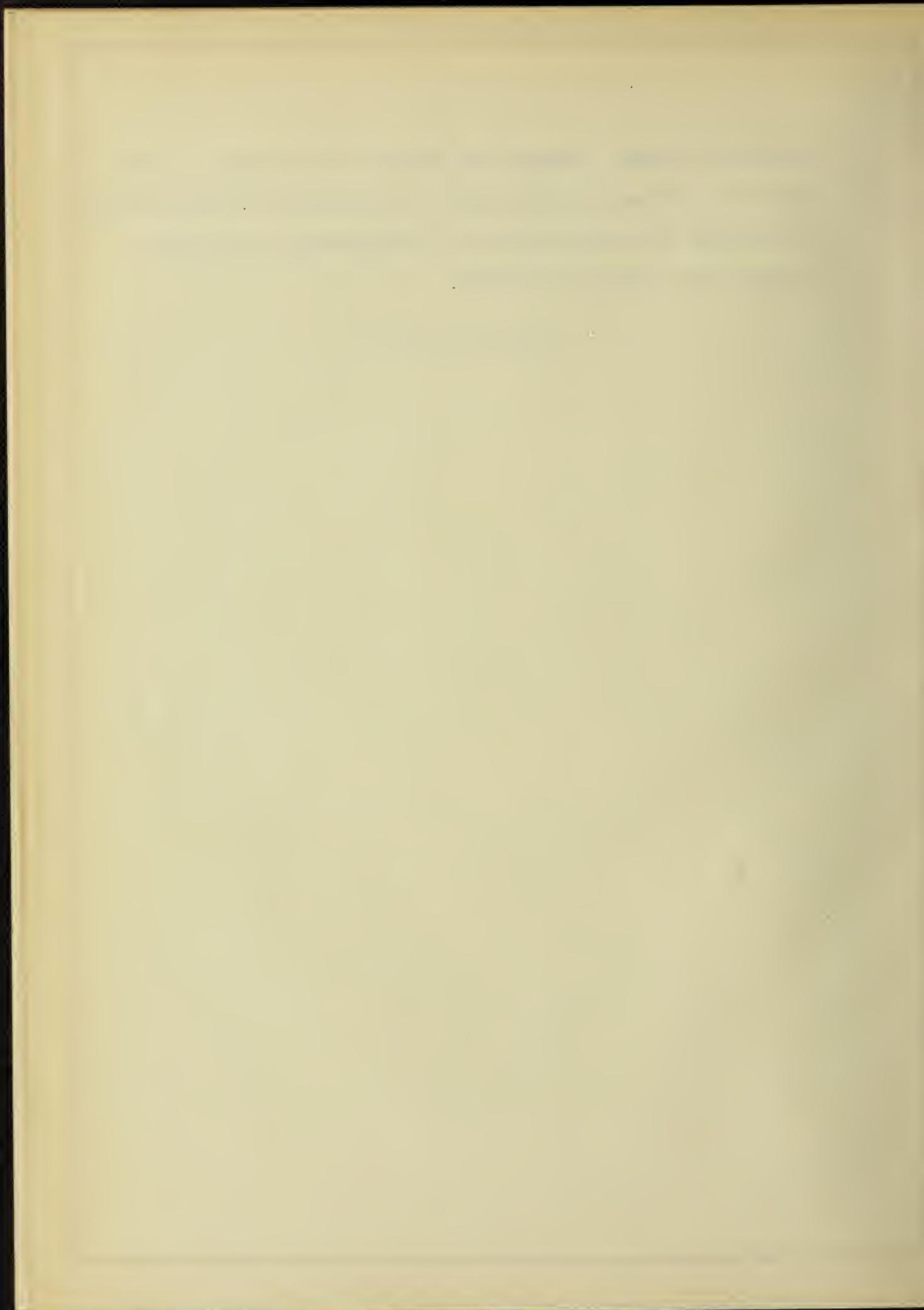
decidedly different from that of the critics who had preceded her. Their object was to single out in them that which was in harmony with French tastes and ideas and to disregard the rest; her idea was to study the part that was not French, to note in what it was distinctive and what value it might have, irrespective of the established notions and standards of the French. In this connection she makes the famous distinction between the literatures of the North of Europe and the South, calling the former romantic, the latter classic. She also tries to determine the distinguishing peculiarities of each country's literature; thus she introduces into France the real comparative study of literature. This is a further blow at the eighteenth century system, for now the critic must take into account English taste, German taste, etc., to arrive finally at what may be called international or cosmopolitan taste.

Mme de Staël's rôle in quickening and enriching the eighteenth century language is only a minor one; Chateaubriand is the great figure here. But more than that of any other person perhaps, the influence of Mme de Staël broke down "le monde" and "le goût," two of the obstacles mentioned by Lanson as preventing the developement of French literature at the end of the eighteenth century. This influence was exerted through her enthusiasm for the expression of the individual, of his



personal feelings; through her theory of literature as the expression of society along with the doctrine of perfectibility; through her contribution of the knowledge of foreign literatures, especially German.

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## CHAPTER II

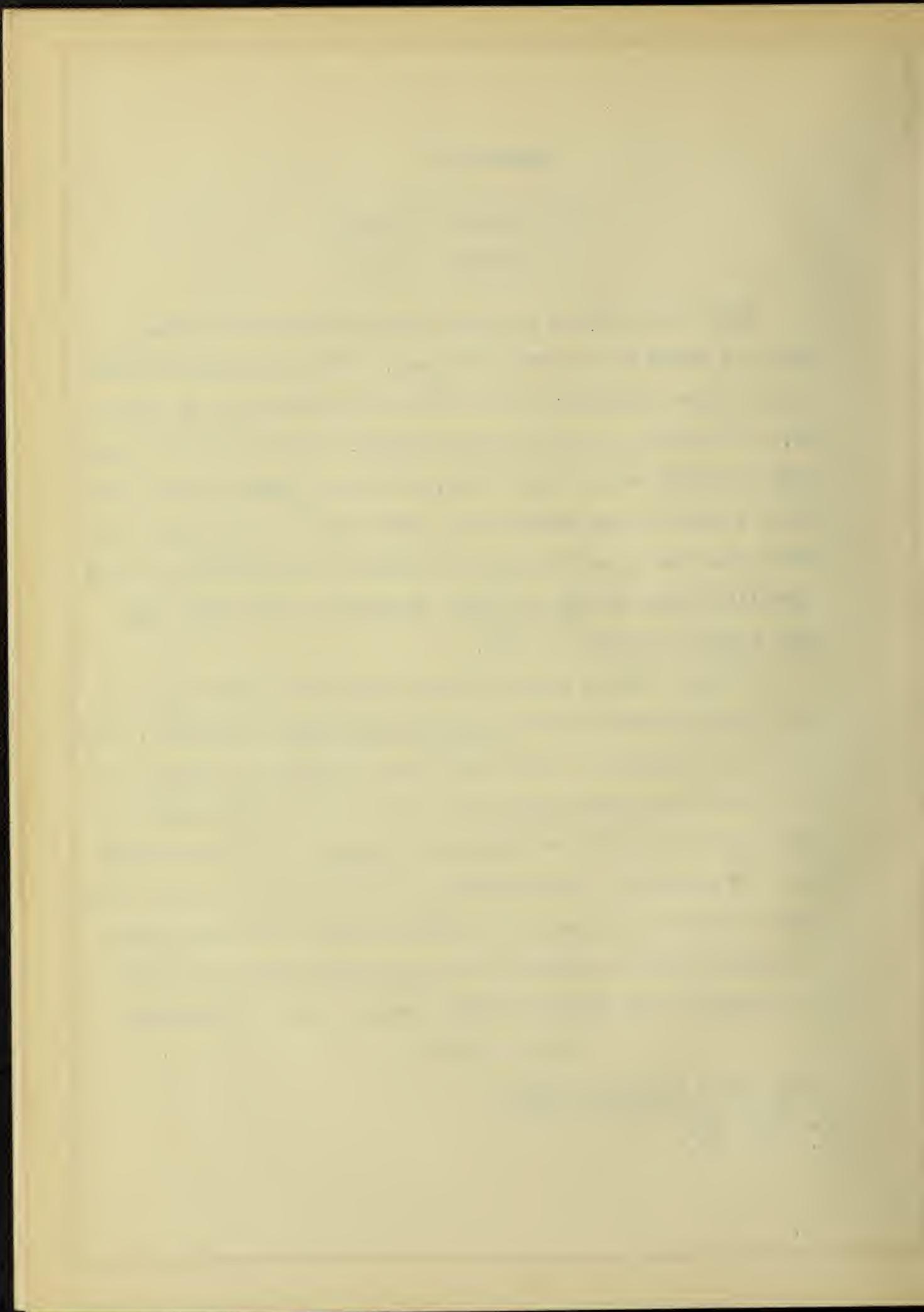
Sainte-Beuve's Interest  
in Madame de Staël

That Sainte-Beuve was very keenly interested in Mme de Staël is shown by his own statement: "J'ai aimé Mme de Staël et je l'aime toujours; elle a été un des cultes de ma jeunesse, et ce culte, je ne l'ai pas abjuré."<sup>1</sup> This interest began comparatively early in his life, as he had begun to read her works before he was twenty-five years old;<sup>2</sup> it had not ceased a year and a half before his death, for an article by him —Camille Jordan et Mme de Staël— appeared in the Revue des deux mondes of March 1, 1868.

In May, 1835 he wrote a long article about her which is later incorporated in the Portraits de femmes collection. This article, he says, is "bien moins une biographie qu'une idée, un reflet de peinture morale sur la critique littéraire."<sup>3</sup> He indicates that before writing this Portrait, he has studied her very carefully, even minutely, for he says: "... j'ai tâché, dans les traits généraux de ce grand esprit, de tenir compte de beaucoup plus de détails et de souvenirs minutieux qu'il ne convenait d'en exprimer."<sup>4</sup> The general tone of the essay

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1. Nouveaux Lundis II, 291.
2. Portraits de femmes, 104.
3. Ibid. 87.
4. Ibid. 87.



is as laudatory as Mme Necker de Saussure's Notice sur Mme de Staël, which is almost invariably criticised as being entirely too favorable to Mme de Staël. That time made no change in his admiration for her is shown by a note added thirty years later : " .... sauf quelques correctifs de détail que nous pourrions apporter à notre première idée, les traits essentiels et principaux de l'Etude qu'on vient de lire restent vrais pour nous aujourd'hui comme il y a trente ans." <sup>1</sup> The publication by Mme Lenormant of Coppet et Weimar, a collection of a part of the correspondance between Mme de Staël and Louise von Weimar with supplementary comments, occasioned two Lundis, May 5, and May 12, 1862. Sainte-Beuve, when taken to task by Mme de Staël's daughter for writing again about her, justified himself by saying: " Je désire m'occuper de Mme de Staël parce qu'il me semble que je la sens et la comprends autant que personne; et bien que sorti de terre à un tout autre endroit et d'une toute autre génération qu'elle, un sentiment d'admiration me dit, ainsi qu'à ceux de mon âge, qu'elle nous appartient à tous." <sup>2</sup>

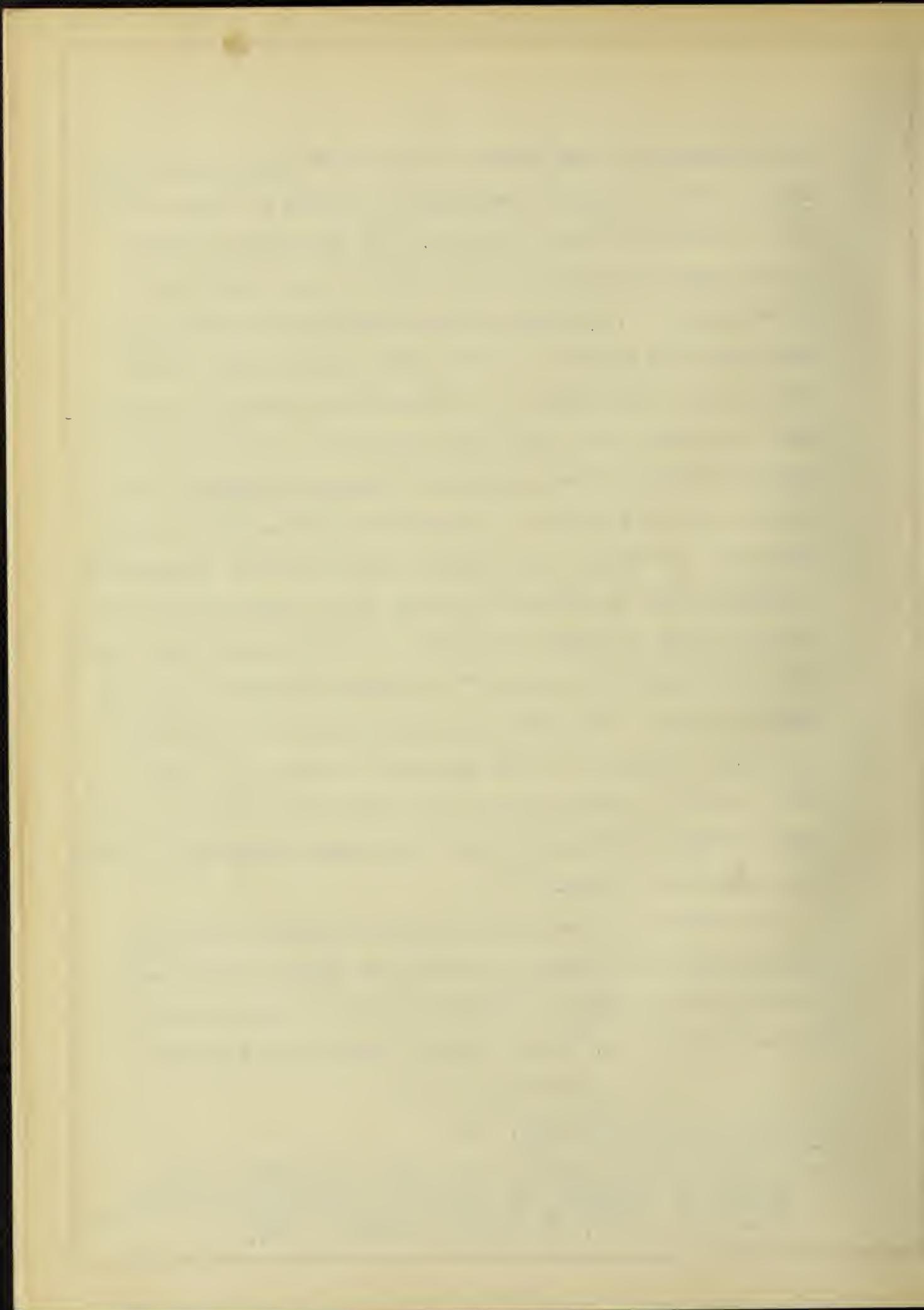
The three articles mentioned above, Camille Jordan et Mme de Staël, the Portrait, and the two Lundis are the ones in which Mme de Staël is either the central figure or one of the central figures.<sup>3</sup> But it is not only when his subject

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1. Portraits de femmes, 164, note.

2. Nouveaux Lundis II, 291.

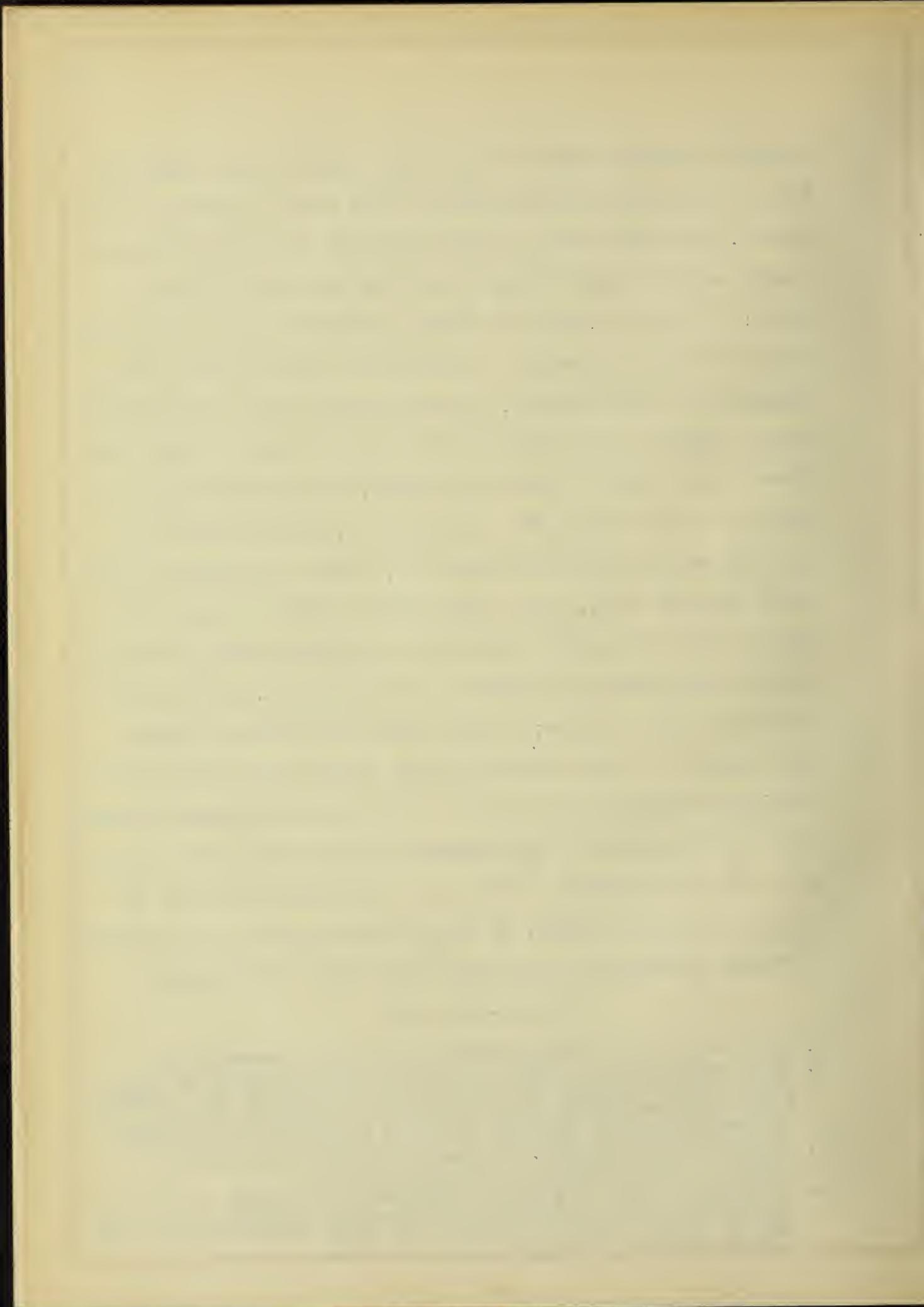
3. Her name however occurs in the title of another Lundi—La Comtesse d'Albany par Saint-René Taillandier; Lettres inédites de Sismondi, Bonstetten, Mme de Staël, Mme de Souza, etc. Aug. 24 and 31, 1863. Nouveaux Lundis V, 395.



primarily concerns Mme de Staël that Sainte-Beuve speaks of her; in his other writings she is very often referred to, or quoted. One might note in this connection an interesting statement made by Jules Troubat, the last secretary of Sainte-Beuve: "J'ai noté comme un indice caractéristique les auteurs le plus souvent cités par Sainte-Beuve : Saint-Simon, Vauvenargues, La Rochefoucauld, Saint-Evremond, Senac de Meilhan."<sup>1</sup> Let us compare the number of references to Mme de Staël with those to the authors cited by Troubat.<sup>2</sup> La Rochefoucauld is referred to 189 times, Mme de Staël 183, Saint-Simon 181, Saint-Evremond 109, Vauvenargues 86, Senac de Meilhan 33. We would conclude then, that, since Mme de Staël is one of the authors most frequently referred to by Sainte-Beuve, Troubat should have given her a place in his statement. Unfavorable references are very few; we have found only three. Sainte-Beuve says: "... par malheur, Mme de Staël était cause qu'il (Benjamin Constant) avait écrit cette phrase également exaltée et si antifrançaise: "Les flammes de Moscou ont été l'aurore de la liberté du monde."<sup>3</sup> Here the criticism is that of the Bonapartist Sainte-Beuve. He also criticizes her for an excess of "vague instinct de sentiment"<sup>4</sup> and admits the "défaits

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1. Souvenirs du dernier secrétaire de Sainte-Beuve, 338.
2. This comparison is based on: Table des Causeries du Lundi, Portraits de femmes, et Portraits littéraires, by Pierrot; Table des Premiers Lundis, Nouveaux Lundis, et Portraits contemporains, by Giraud; Table de Port-Royal, by Montaignon;
3. Nouveaux Lundis I, 426. Benjamin Constant's sentence is found in his l'Esprit de conquête, preface.
4. "L'auteur étaie trop souvent peut-être ce vague instinct de sentiment, qu'il ne faut ni dédaigner ni prodiguer, et dont Mme de Staël n'a pas toujours été assez sobre dans ses admirables écrits." Premiers Lundis I, 135.

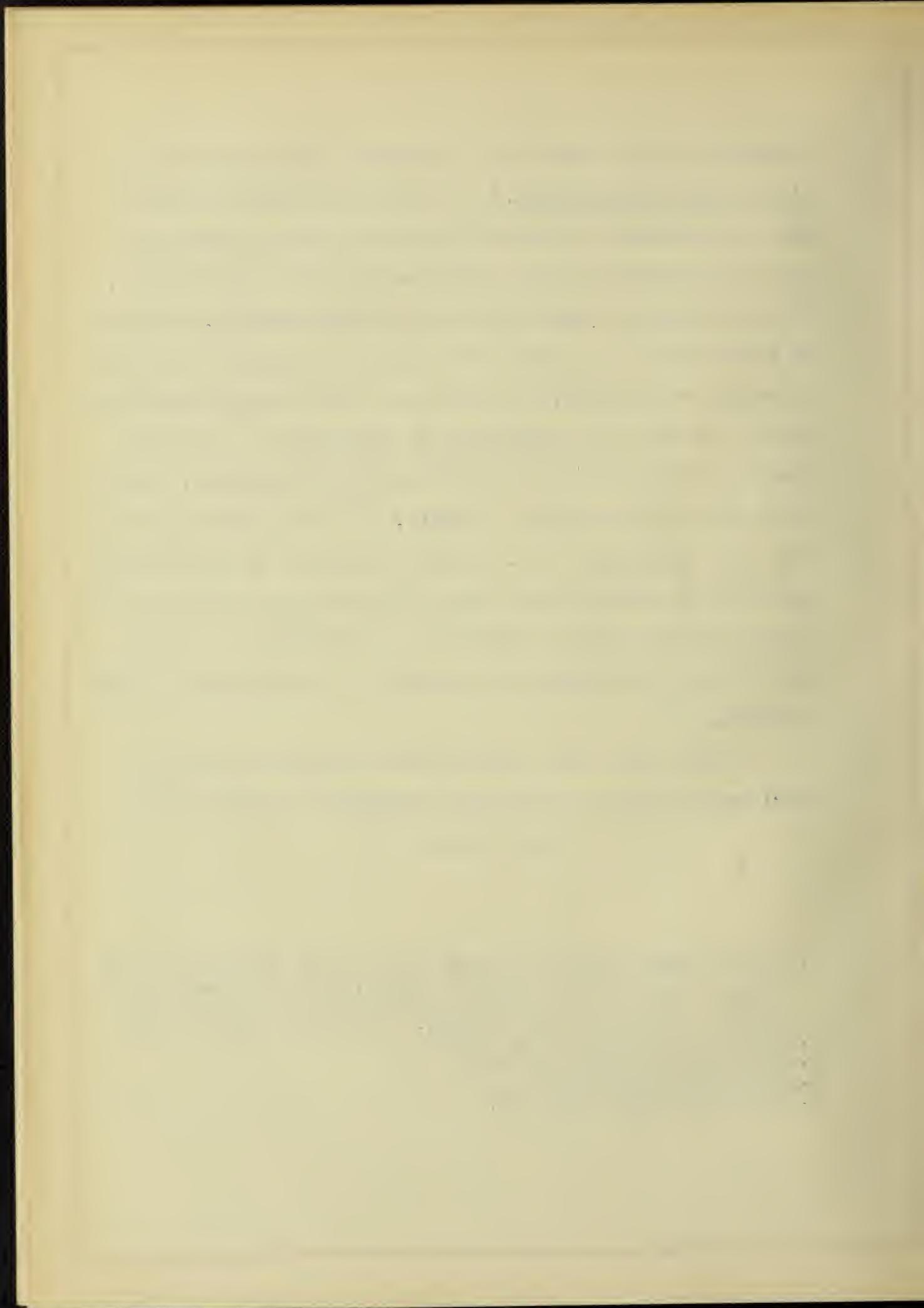


d'obscurité et de subtilité" which Mme d'Albany finds in l' Influence des passions.<sup>1</sup> In choosing references which show Sainte-Beuve's favorable opinion of Mme de Staël, the only embarrassment is one of choice among the great number. The following are among the more striking examples. He speaks of Fauriel as " ... goûte d'une femme, la première de toutes en esprit et en bonté, de celle qui, selon une expression heureuse, sut avoir la supériorité si charmante."<sup>2</sup> Also in speaking of the writers of the Revolutionary period : " Mme de Staël et Burke sont hors ligne ."<sup>3</sup> He further pays her this high compliment : " .... mais, M. Manuel ne connaissait pas moins la France, sans y être pourtant jamais venu. Jeune il avait entrevu Mme de Staël."<sup>4</sup> And finally : " ... les deux femmes supérieures de ce siècle : ... Mme Sand, .... Mme de Staël."<sup>5</sup>

We see, then, that Sainte-Beuve's interest in Mme de Staël began early and continued throughout his whole life;

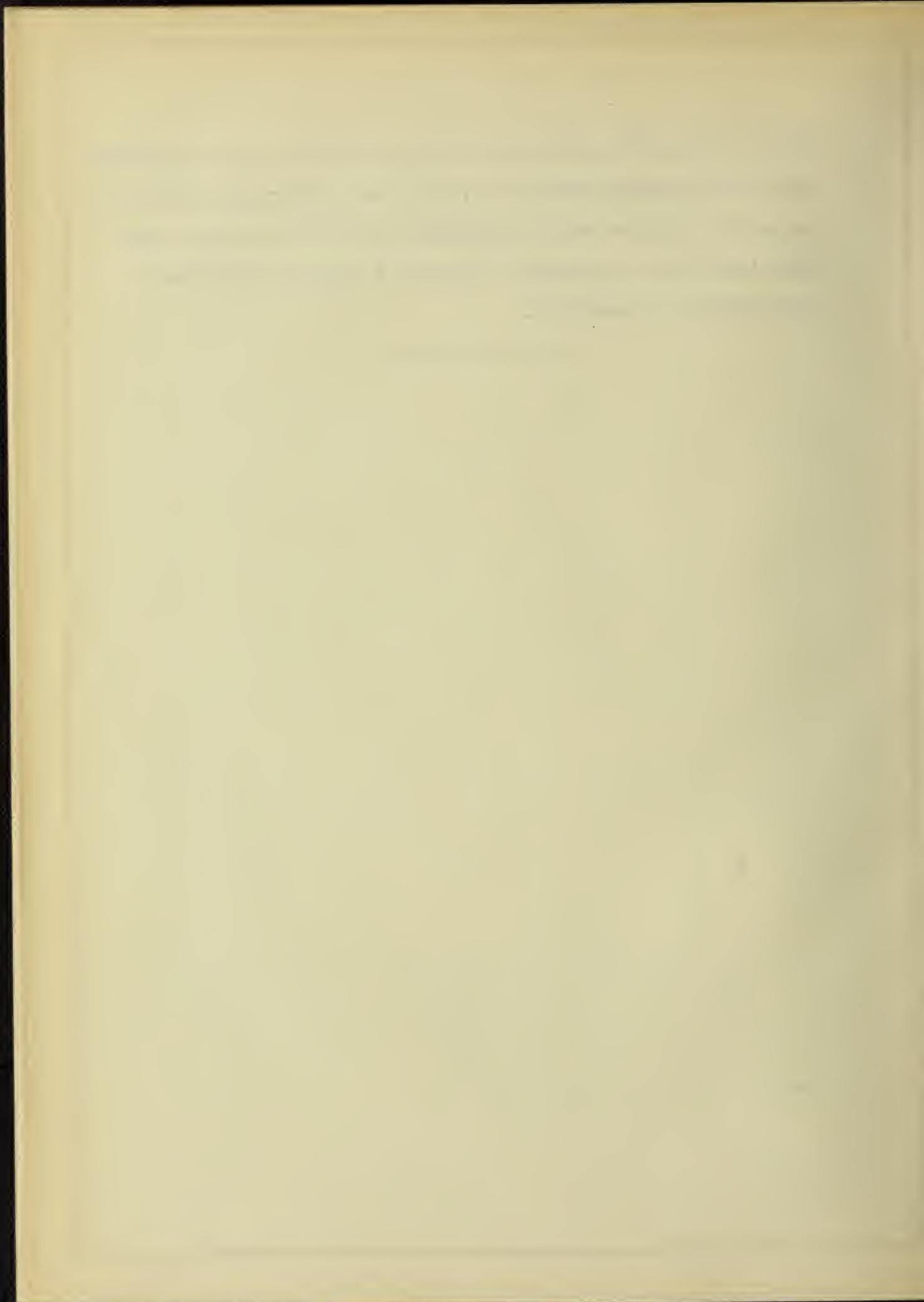
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1. " Elle (Mme d'Albany) ne rend pas du tout justice, il est vrai, à l'éloquence de Mme de Staël, mais elle ne se trompe pas trop sur les défauts d'obscurité et de subtilité qu'elle reproche à son ouvrage." Nouveaux Lundis V, 425.
2. Portraits contemporains IV, 147.
3. Causeries du Lundi IV, 471.
4. Nouveaux Lundis IX, 67.
5. Nouveaux Lundis XII, 123.



that he was sufficiently interested in her to devote several articles to some phases of her life and works; that she was one of the authors most frequently referred to by him; and that in all this treatment of her his opinion has almost uniformly been favorable.

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## CHAPTER III

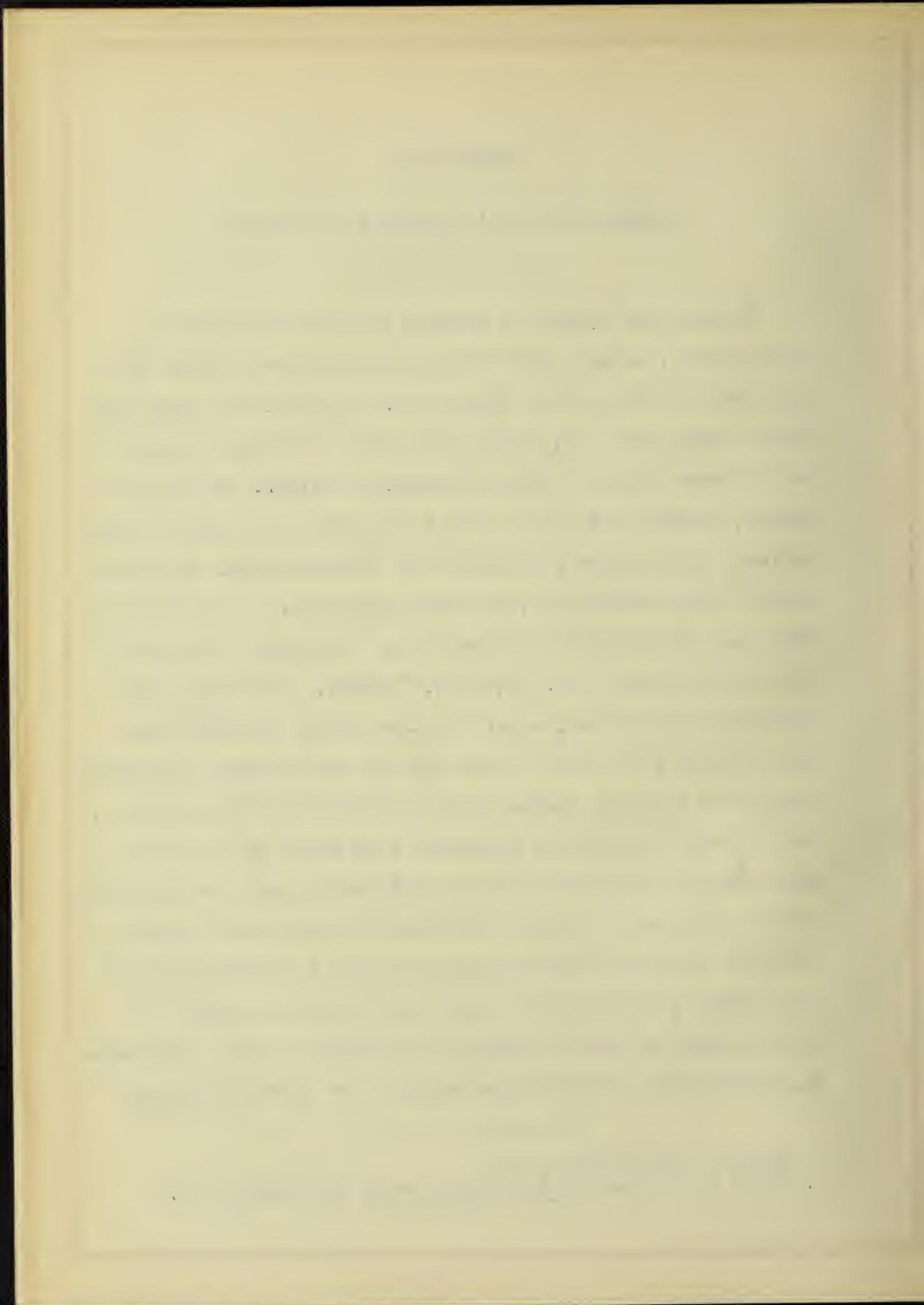
Madame de Staël's Indirect Influence  
on Sainte-Beuve

To pass now to Mme de Staël's indirect influence on Sainte-Beuve, we may note that his literary work began with his first article in the Globe, Oct. 10, 1824. The Globe was first issued Sept. 15, 1824, with Dubois, a former teacher of Sainte-Beuve at the Collège Bourbon, as editor. In his prospectus, Dubois said that it was his purpose to respect French national taste while presenting the literary news, and thereby the intellectual life, of other countries.<sup>1</sup> Let us examine some of the literary theories of the Globe. In an article in this paper, Oct. 15, 1825, Viennet, a statesman and writer of this period, says: "Chaque siècle considère les mêmes choses d'un point de vue qui lui est propre; les notions populaires à chaque époque font la littérature des nations...; pas un homme de génie ne ressemble à un autre et ne suit la même route; les règles absolues sont bonnes pour les analystes et les critiques, et comme principes d'étude, ainsi que les procédés du dessin linéaire; mais ensuite la création est et doit demeurer libre, sous peine de mort pour les arts."<sup>2</sup> Here are Mme de Staël's theory of literature as the expression of society, and her rebellion against the rules. The Globe

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1. Harper, Sainte-Beuve, 76

2. Cited by Michaut, Sainte-Beuve avant les Lundis, 78.



advocated especially the romantic theater <sup>1</sup> and criticised very severely the contemporary writers of plays in the seventeenth and eighteenth century style. It demanded a dramatic revolution and the destruction of the rules. Concerning Mme de Staël's influence here Lanson says : " On peut dire que ces chapitres ( the chapters in de l'Allemagne which have to do with dramatic art ) ont décidé de la forme et des intentions du drame romantique. " <sup>2</sup>

But it was especially to bring foreign literature into France that the Globe was established, according to the purpose stated by its editor. And this purpose was carried out, for Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, modern Greek, and other modern literatures were studied. <sup>3</sup> As Michaut remarks, however, ".... comme il est naturel après Rousseau, après Mme de Staël,.... c'est aux littératures du Nord que le Globe accorde le plus d'attention." <sup>4</sup> Goethe and Schiller are studied in detail, Klopstock, Kleist, Schlegel, are also treated. English literature has its place with Shakespeare in the foreground; but Byron and Scott likewise receive attention. Here we have an indubitable indication of Mme de Staël's influence, for it was she who gave the great impetus toward the study of foreign

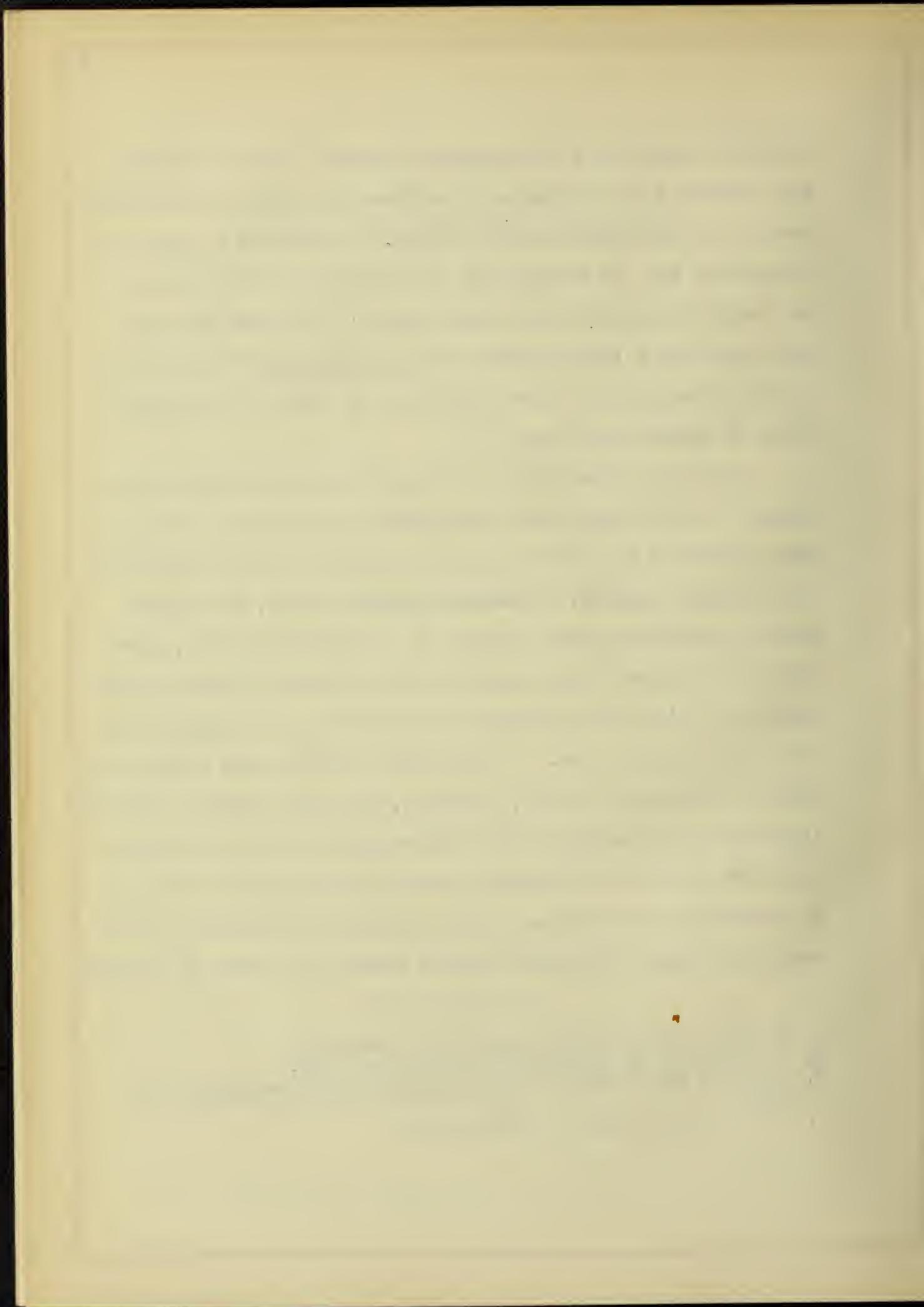
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1. Michaut, Sainte-Beuve avant les Lundis, 82.

2. Histoire de la littérature française, 885.

3. For list see Michaut, Sainte-Beuve avant les Lundis, 90, note.

4. Sainte-Beuve avant les Lundis, 91.



literatures and the idea of a proper comparative study of them. France owes to her a better understanding of Shakespeare's real significance, and Goethe was introduced into France chiefly through her efforts.

Witnesses are not lacking to testify to her influence on the men of the Globe. Sainte-Beuve himself says : " L'influence de pensée qu'elle exerça ... sur le jeune parti libéral philosophique, sur celui que la nuance du Globe représenta plus tard, fut directe. "<sup>1</sup> Brunetière says : " La critique du Globe n'a guère fait que développer les idées de Mme de Staël. "<sup>2</sup> And Sainte-Beuve again : " Il y avait une fois une grande dame, qui ouvrait son salon à tous venants; là surtout prêchait un novateur tudesque (presumably Schlegel) qui endoctrinait les jeunes têtes. La semence a fructifié; d'imberbes professeurs, sortis du salon de Mme de Staël, en ont propagé les doctrines, et depuis que le Globe a paru, le mal est devenu effrayant. Voilà en trois mots l'histoire du romantisme, selon M. Duval. "<sup>3</sup>

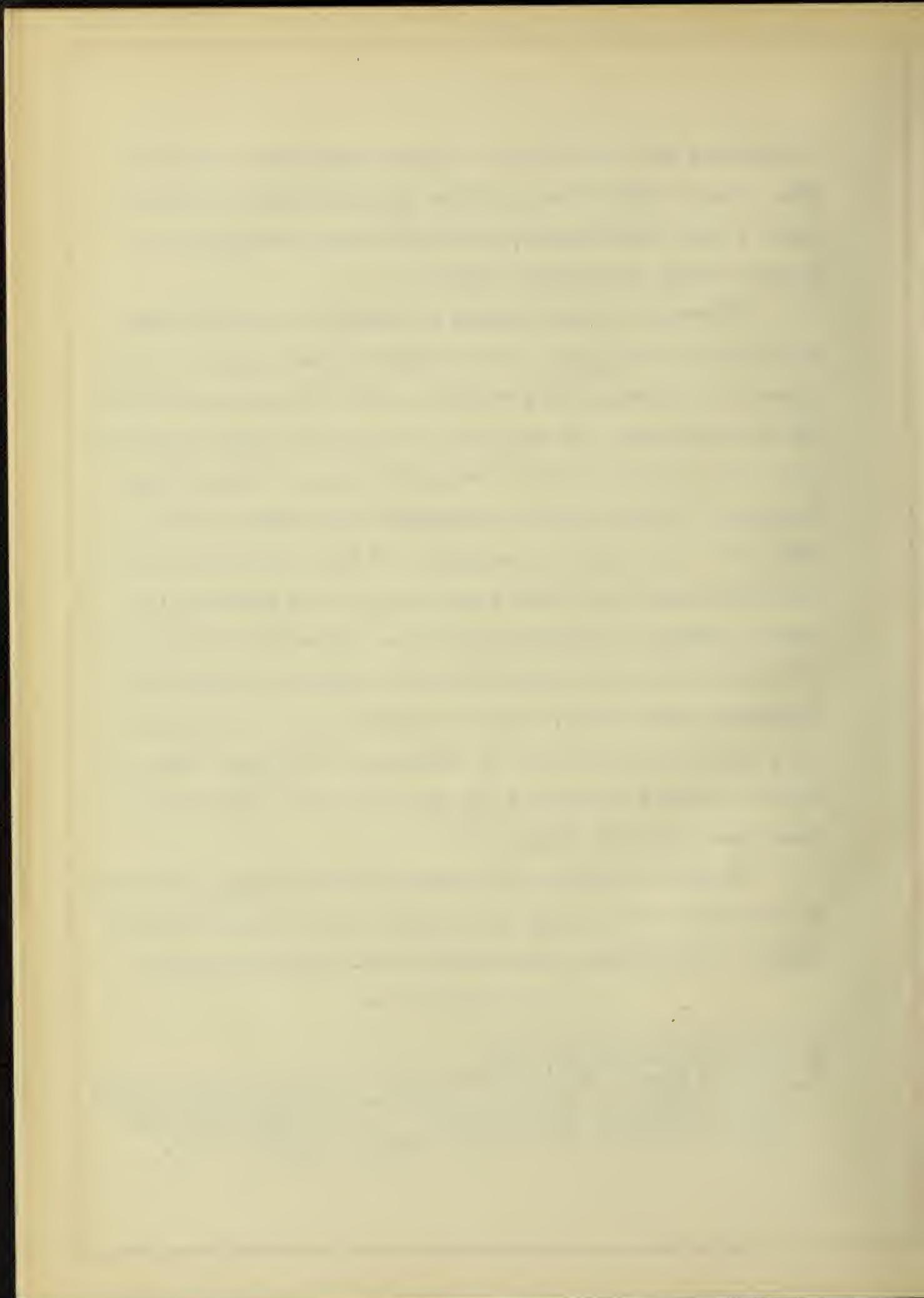
It would be needless to question that the Globe exercised an influence on the young Sainte-Beuve, but one may well ask whether this influence was really vital. Sainte-Beuve may

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1. Portraits de femmes, 162.

2. Evolution des genres, 190.

3. Duval, a member of the Academy, had written a play, Charles II, preceded by a Notice in which he protested against the dramatic theories of the Globe. It is a summary of this Notice which is quoted above. Premiers Lundis I, 295.

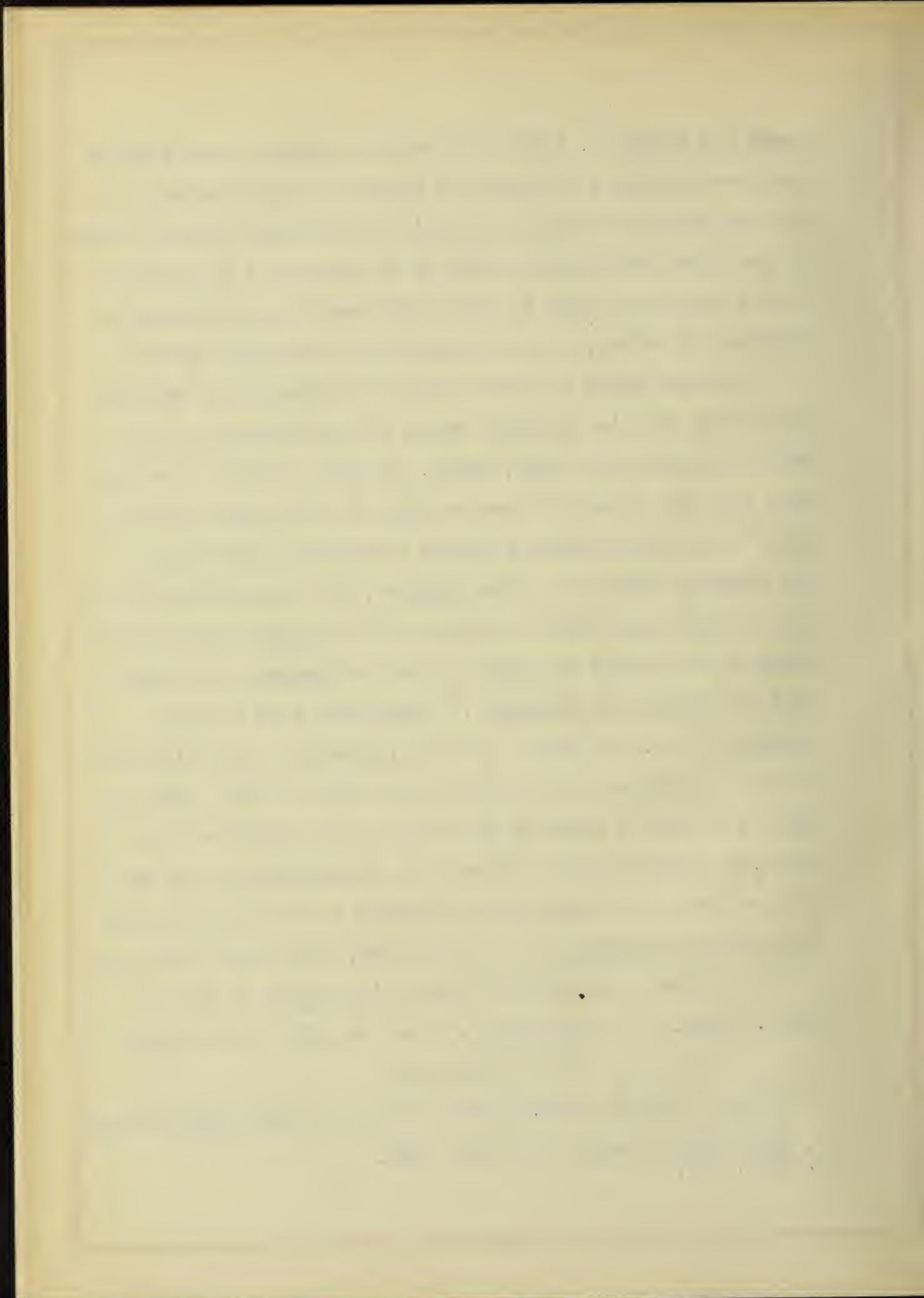


speak for himself : " Mon cher monsieur Dubois, vous êtes de ceux vers lesquels la pensée se reporte le plus souvent et le plus particulièrement, lorsqu'on se souvient des meilleures et des plus fructueuses années de sa jeunesse : de celles où l'on a acquis ce qu'on ne fait plus ensuite que prolonger et dépenser au dehors. Car le dedans ne se renouvelle pas." <sup>1</sup>

A second phase of Sainte-Beuve's literary life was his connection with the Cénacle, among the guiding spirits of which were Hugo, de Vigny, Dumas. We shall concern ourselves here with the dramatic theories only of this group. Michaut says <sup>2</sup> that Sainte-Beuve attached very great importance to the dramatic theories of the Cénacle. This same authority on Sainte-Beuve says that the author of the Lundis conceives the drama of the future as based, if not on Cromwell, at least upon the Préface de Cromwell. <sup>3</sup> Brunetière says of this Préface : " ... sur aucune question, générale ou particulière, ni sur la question de la liberté dans l'art et du " faux bon goût ", ni sur la question de l'emploi de l'histoire dans le drame, à l'imitation de Goethe et de Shakespeare,... ni sur la question enfin du mélange des genres et des trois unités, la Préface de Cromwell ne contient rien, absolument rien, qui ne soit ailleurs, et notamment dans l'Allemagne de Mme de Staël. Lisez... les chapitres ... sur le Goût et sur l'Art

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1. Letter to Dubois, Aug. 2, 1843. Cited by Séché, Sainte-Beuve I, 64
2. Sainte-Beuve avant les Lundis, 200.
3. Ibid. 201.

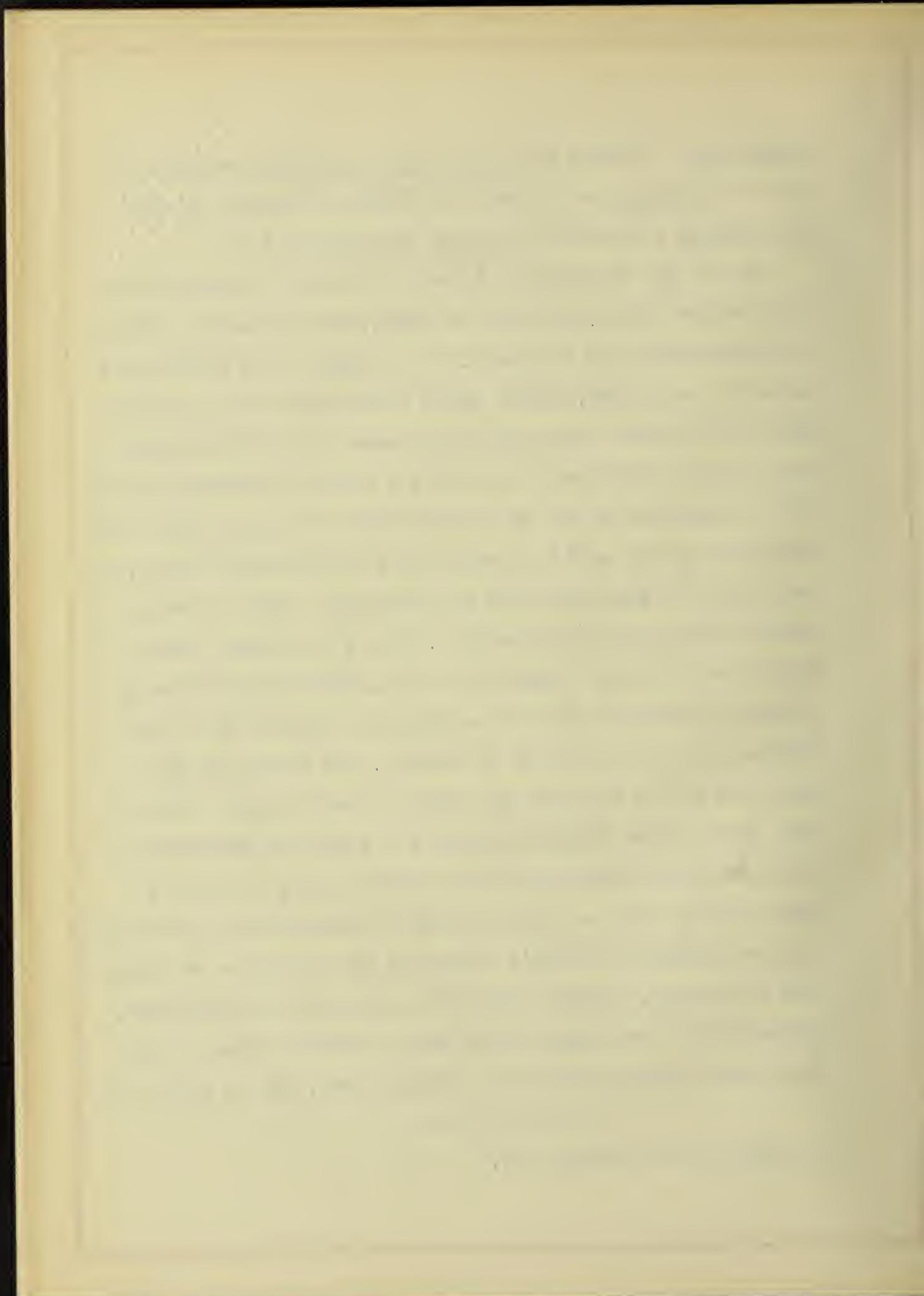


dramatique . De même que Henri III et sa cour a précédé de six mois Hernani sur la scène du Théâtre-Français, de même l'Allemagne a précédé la Préface de Cromwell."<sup>1</sup>

One of the outstanding figures of French literary criticism between the time of Mme de Staël, and the mature period of Sainte-Beuve, is Villemain. He belongs to the progressive school of criticism, and we might expect him to be a connecting link between these two great names in the development of literary criticism, or possibly a kind of intermediary for the transmission of Mme de Staël's ideas to Sainte-Beuve. His criticism may be said to proceed from an historical basis. He saw that a literary work was not isolated, that it had an intimate connection with society, that it, in fact, was a part of society, in a word, its voice. There results then a national literature in each country, the expression of the national type or condition of society. But these national types can not be isolated and there is exchange and interaction. Each nation should develop its essential characteristics, which will react upon the other nations, so that we shall finally have an international or cosmopolitan literature. Here we have Mme de Staël's theory of literature as an expression of society, and her ideal of a cosmopolitan literature. Villemain also develops one of Mme de Staël's ideas - that literature is explained by the study of man, who is given his

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1. Evolution des genres, 191.



proper setting or background by the study of history; and inversely that literature makes known man, who in turn helps to make known the historical milieu of which he is one element. Sainte-Beuve develops and perfects this idea - or method if you will - though he seems finally to have allowed it to become an excuse for a rather disconnected writing of biographies. It would seem clear from what has been said that Villemain is a step between Mme de Staël and Sainte-Beuve, and that the method of the latter, in so far as he may be said to have had one, is the natural development of her theories. Brunetière is of this opinion for he says : "... la méthode qu'un autre ( Sainte-Beuve ) allait pousser plus avant, c'est bien lui ( Villemain ) qui ne s'est plus contenté de l'indiquer, comme avaient fait Mme de Staël et Chateaubriand, mais il l'a lui-même vraiment appliquée et réalisée.<sup>1</sup>" Michaut says : " Villemain, venu après Chateaubriand et Mme de Staël, eux-mêmes venus à la suite de Rousseau, entre dans la voie qu'ils ont brillamment percée..... Sainte-Beuve a repris cette méthode."<sup>2</sup> And Lanson : " Il ( Villemain ) avait renouvelé l'étude de la littérature selon l'esprit de Mme de Staël."<sup>3</sup> He scarcely believes that Sainte-Beuve has a real method<sup>4</sup>, but he says : " Il semble, d'abord, que

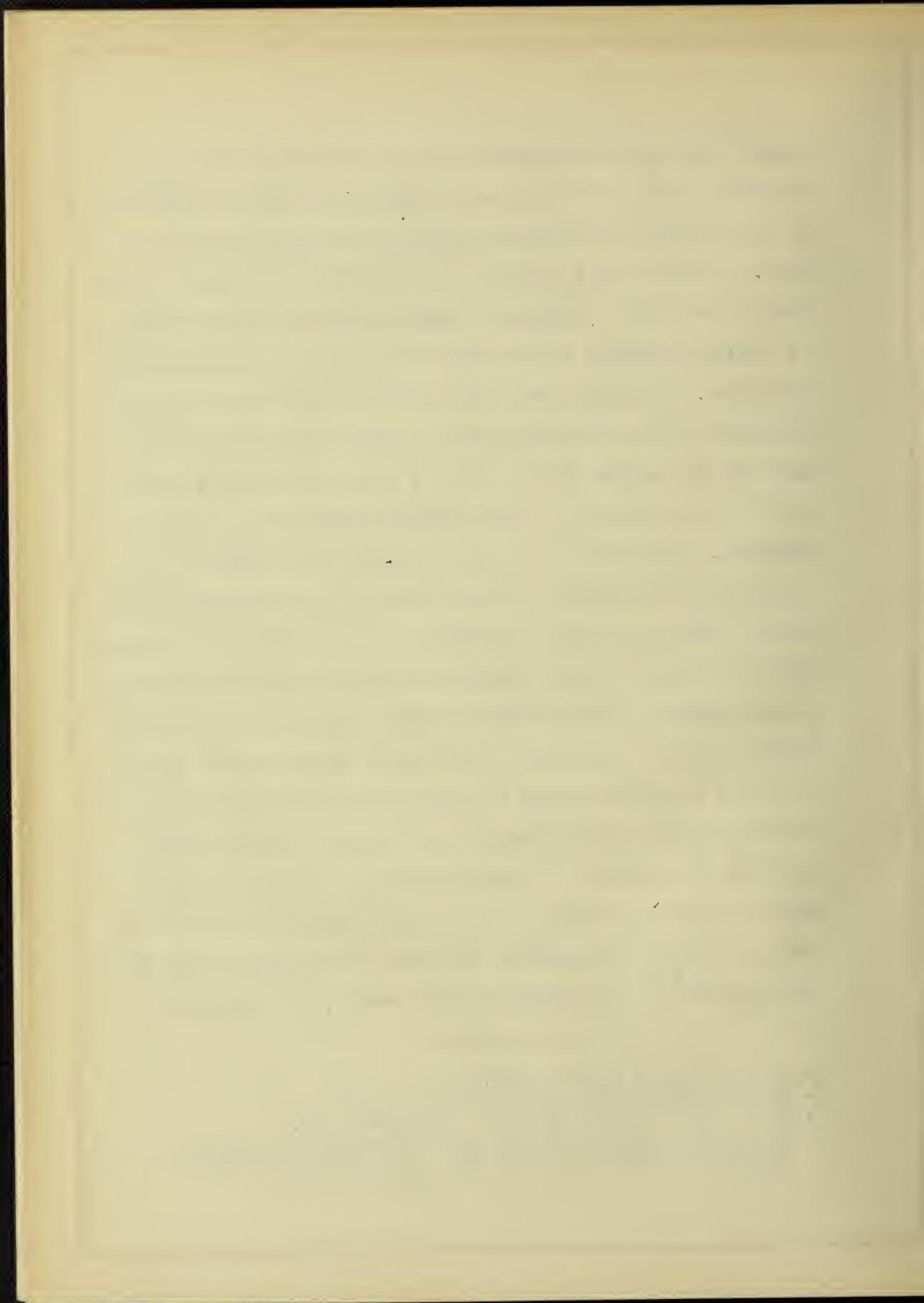
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1. Evolution des genres, 209.

2. Sainte-Beuve avant les Lundis, 4 and 5.

3. Histoire de la littérature française, 926.

4. "En réalité, Sainte-Beuve... a poursuivi son plaisir. Et ce plaisir, c'était le spectacle de l'individu vivant." Histoire de la littérature française, 1042.

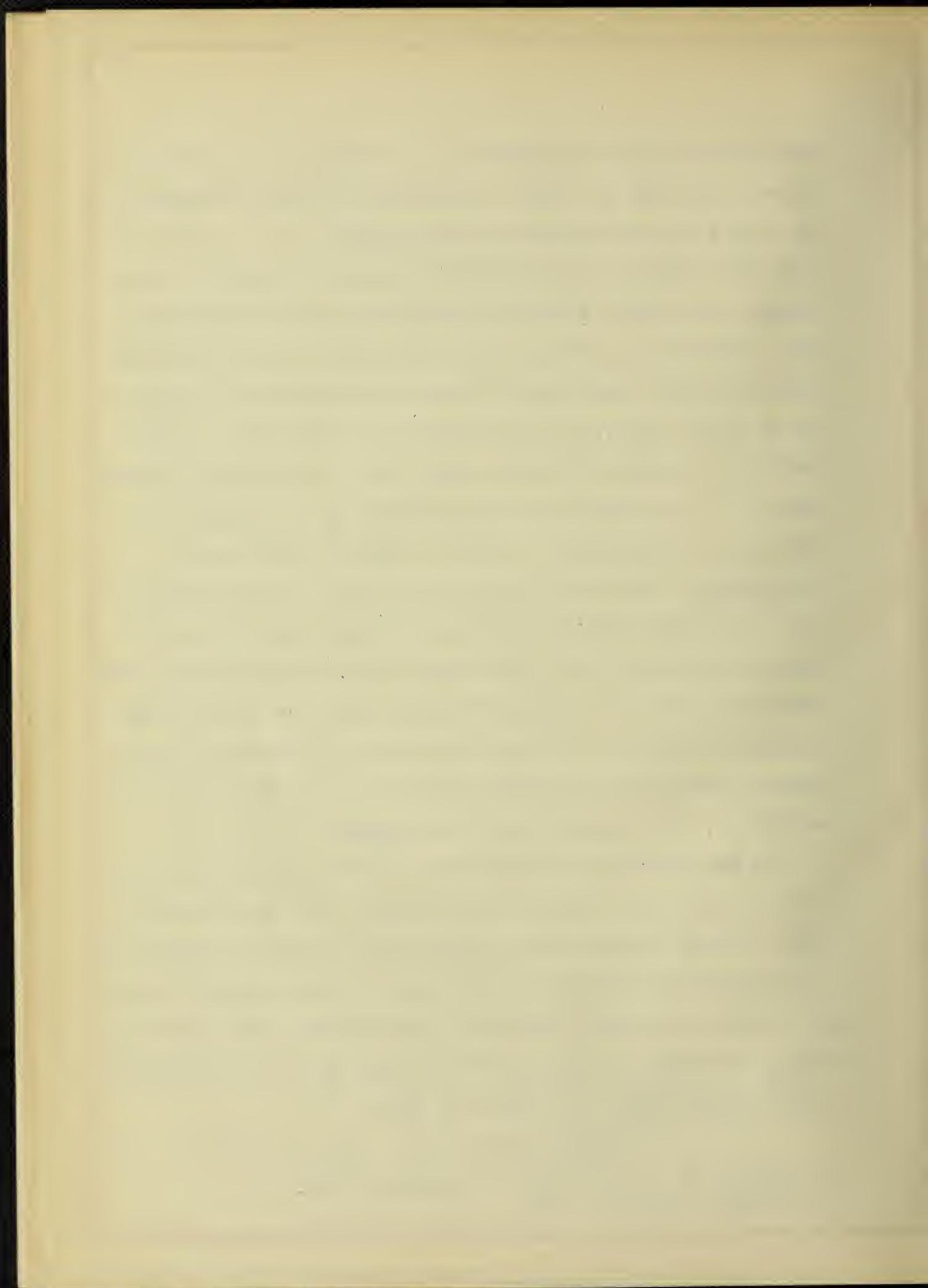


Sainte-Beuve continue l'oeuvre de Villemain."<sup>1</sup> Irrefutable evidence that Mme de Staël is responsible for the biographical method is given by Sainte-Beuve himself : "... qu'y a-t-il de plus légitime que de profiter des notions qu'on a sous la main pour sortir définitivement d'une certaine admiration trop textuelle à la fois et trop abstraite et pour ne pas se contenter même d'une certaine description générale d'un siècle et d'une époque, mais pour serrer de plus près, -- l'analyse des caractères d'auteurs aussi bien que celle des productions ? Il y a soixante ans qu'en France on a commencé d'entrer dans cette voie par le livre de Mme de Staël sur la Littérature ; on a fait un pas de plus sous la Restauration, depuis 1824 surtout et la création du Globe, qui n'a pas été sans influence sur les belles leçons de M. Villemain dans les années qui ont suivi : aujourd'hui on essaye de faire un pas de plus et toutes les fois qu'on le peut, d'interroger directement, d'examiner l'individu-talent dans son éducation, dans sa culture, dans sa vie, dans ses origines."<sup>2</sup>

We may conclude then that Mme de Staël exercised an indirect influence over Sainte-Beuve through three agencies: the Globe, which represents the natural development of her ideas and theories; the Cénacle, which gets its theories of the drama from her and passes them on to Sainte-Beuve; and especially through Villemain, from whom Sainte-Beuve gets his biographical method, which finds its origins in her.

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1. Histoire de la littérature française ,1041.
2. Nouveaux Lundis IX, '71.



## CHAPTER IV

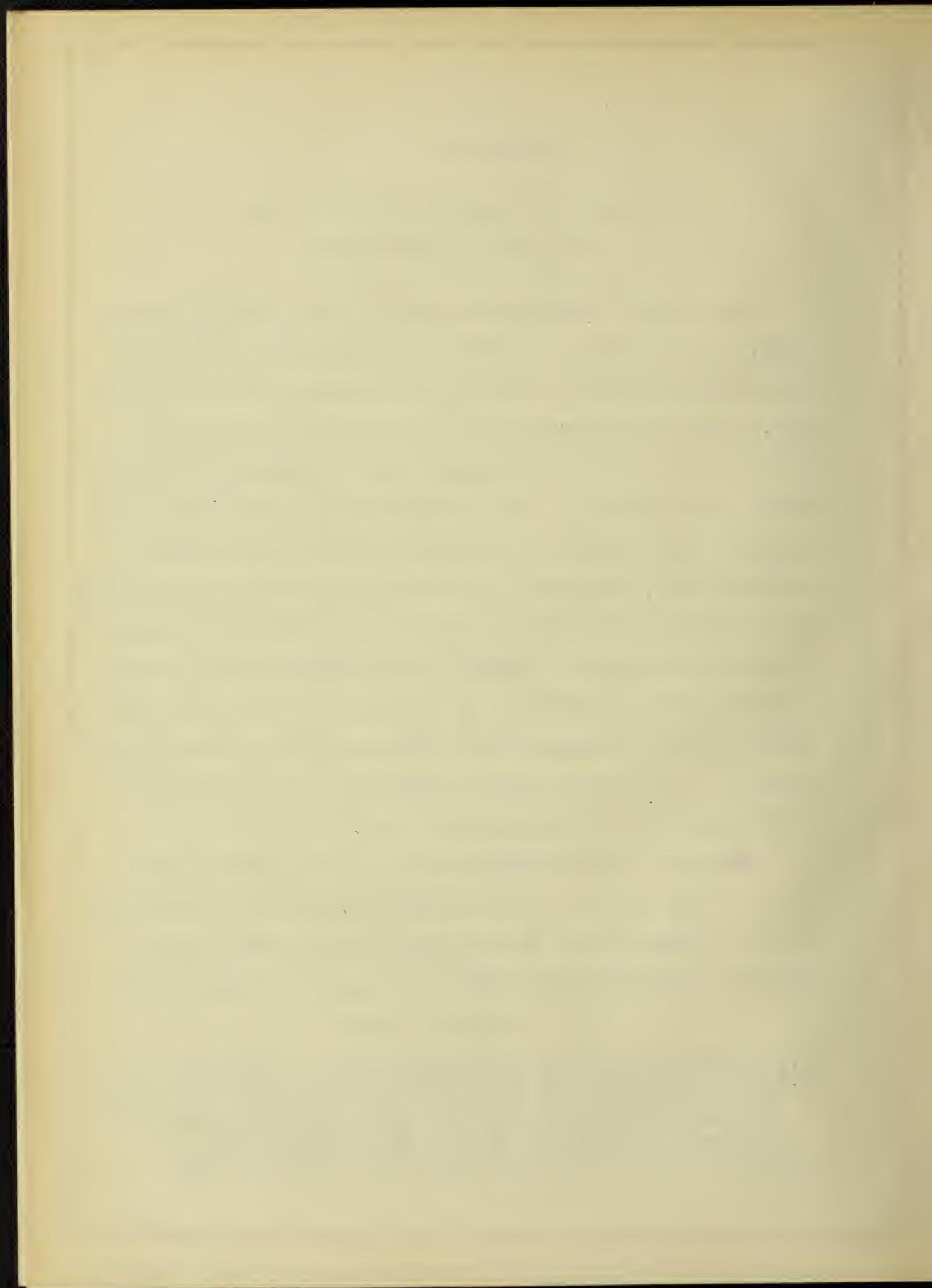
Evidences of Madame de Staël's Direct  
Influence on Sainte-Beuve

The central idea of Mme de Staël's work, de la Littérature, is the doctrine of perfectibility, which according to her conclusions must include literature as well as the sciences. Sainte-Beuve agrees with the doctrine as regards the sciences, but refuses to accept it in the domain of the arts. He is quite explicit : " Le seul progrès net de l'esprit humain est dans la marche et dans les résultats des sciences mathématiques, physiques et naturelles, et aussi de la science historique, en tant qu'elle procède de l'observation comparée et qu'elle ne cesse de s'armer, en tout sens, d'une critique positive. Les littérateurs, en général, ceux qui ne sont que cela, battent la campagne sur cette question de la perfectibilité; ils se prennent à des mirages d'où l'on peut tirer indifféremment des inductions contraires.<sup>1</sup> "

But Mme de Staël seems directly to have aided Sainte-Beuve in his study of German literature. Küchler is authority for the statement that Sainte-Beuve did not know German.<sup>2</sup> Troubat<sup>3</sup> mentions Emile Délerot as a person to whom Sainte-

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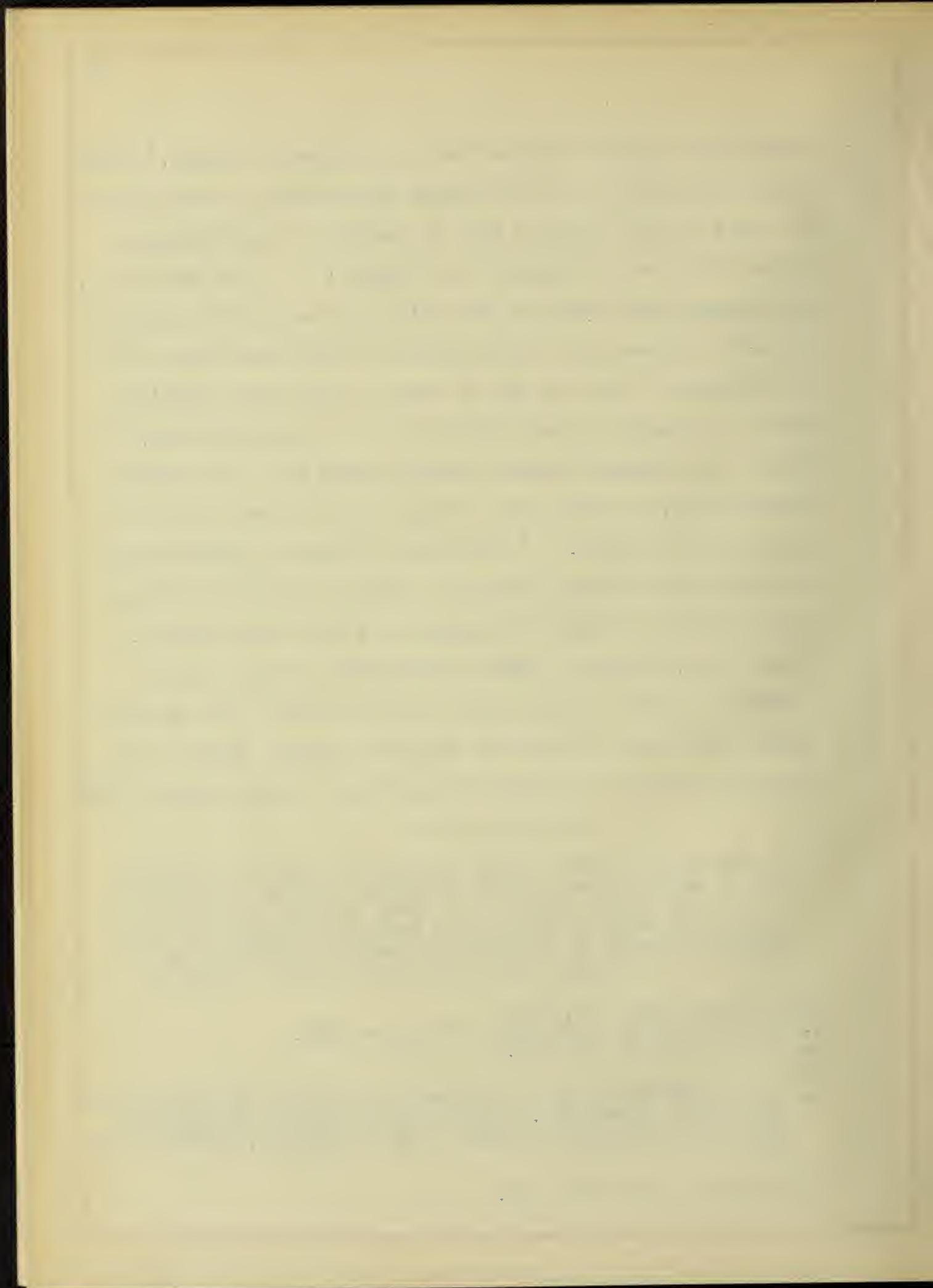
1. Chateaubriand et son groupe littéraire, I, 151, note.
2. "Sainte-Beuve verstand die deutsche Sprache nicht.--- Er hat sicherlich nie einen deutschen Text gelesen." Sainte-Beuve Studien - Walther Küchler, Zeitschrift für französische Sprache und Literatur, XXVIII, Erste Hälfte, 202.
3. Souvenirs du dernier secrétaire de Sainte-Beuve, 338.



Beuve had frequent recourse for translations of German.<sup>1</sup> Since Sainte-Beuve had to get his German literature at second hand, it would be quite natural that he would use de l'Allemagne, especially when he regards it so highly : " ... ce beau livre, l'Allemagne, qui depuis un demi siècle, n'a pas été surpassé."<sup>2</sup> Lanson's statement also has interest in this connection : "Cette Allemagne ( celle de Mme de Staël ) est restée jusqu'en 1870 l' Allemagne de nos littérateurs et de nos artistes."<sup>3</sup> Sainte-Beuve himself speaks clearly enough of : " La pensée d'outre-Rhin, qui nous avait d'abord été révélée et préconisée par Mme de Staël. "<sup>4</sup> According to Küchler, Goethe meant to Sainte-Beuve German literature and Germany.<sup>5</sup> Sainte-Beuve considers Mme de Staël the discoverer of the real Goethe : " Pour nous, Français, c'eût été un grand avantage qu'il (Goethe) se fît voir dès lors ( à Paris, 1786 ), et qu'on le connût comme tant d'illustres étrangers devenus nôtres : on n'aurait pas eu à le découvrir plus tard à travers Mme de Staël "<sup>6</sup>

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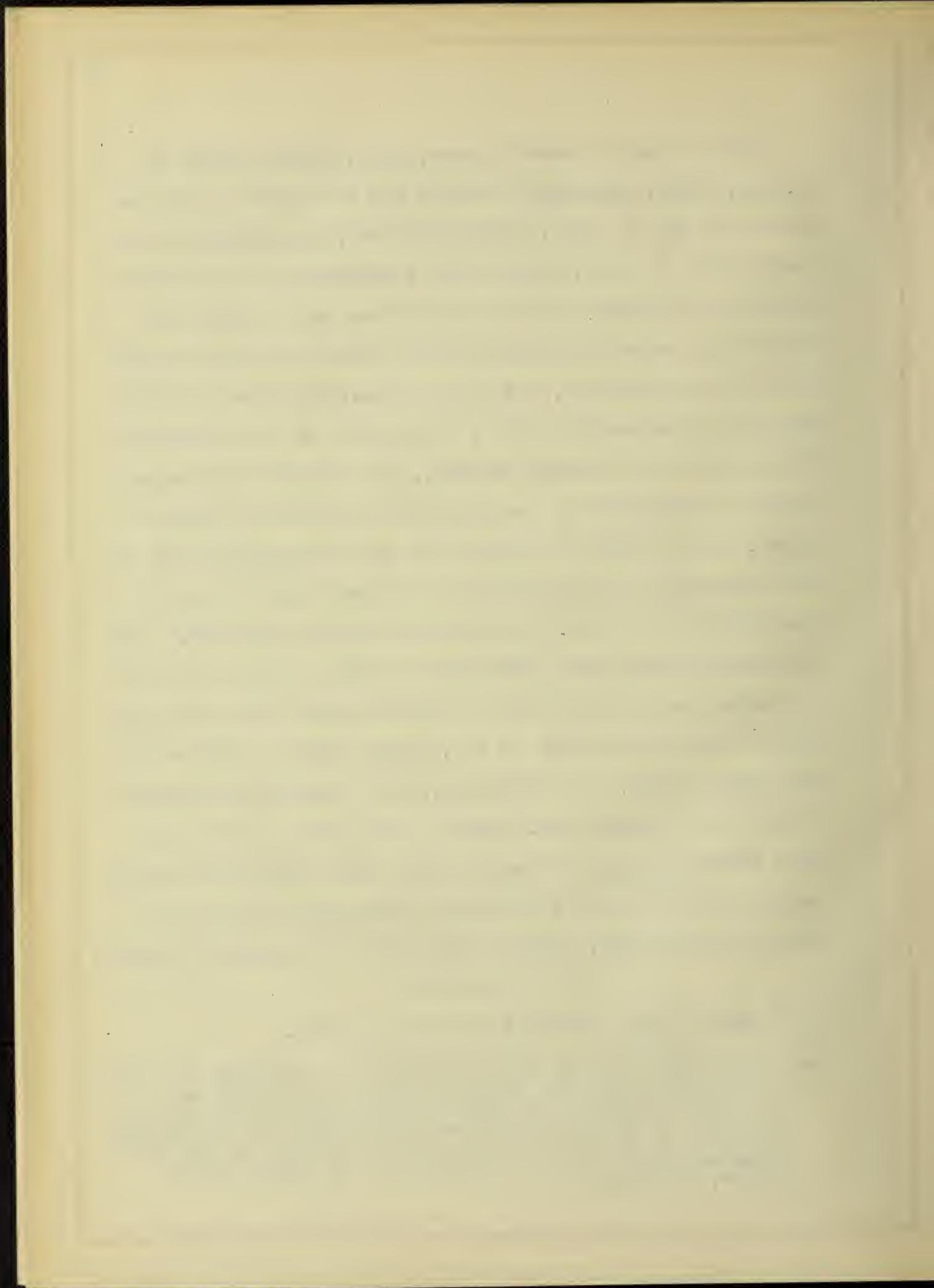
1. Sainte-Beuve likewise used printed translations of Goethe for he mentions one of all of Goethe's works by Jacques Porchat (*Nouveaux Lundis* III, 265); various other translations of German literature are mentioned *passim*; especial mention is made of an "exacte et belle traduction" of Schiller by Adolphe Regnier (*Nouveaux Lundis* III, 266).
2. *Nouveaux Lundis* II, 300.
3. *Histoire de la littérature française*, 883.
4. *Premiers Lundis* II, 248.
5. Goethe bedeutete ihm die deutsche Literatur, Goethe war ihm "la patrie allemande". Sainte-Beuve *Studien-Zeitschrift für französische Sprache und Literatur*, XXVIII, Erste Hälfte, 213.
6. *Nouveaux Lundis* III, 265.



One of Sainte-Beuve's poems, Rome, élégie imitée de M. Aug. Guill. Schlegel,<sup>1</sup> probably has its origin in his interest in Mme de Staël. Schlegel's poem, Rom, Elegie, dedicated to Mme de Staël, begins with a melancholy note, called forth by the sight of the ruins of Rome and the memories which they evoke; afterwards comes a short poetical history of the rise, grandeur, and fall of Rome. Then there returns the note of melancholy with a description of the effect of the ruins in the evening twilight. The sadness thus caused is to be dissipated by the charm of the society of Mme de Staël. Sainte-Beuve has taken over only the general tone of the beginning and the movement of the end in as far as it concerns Mme de Staël. The historical part is omitted.<sup>2</sup> The relatively large place given Mme de Staël in the imitation, in comparison with her place in the original would indicate that it was his interest in her, rather than his interest in the poem as such, or in Schlegel, which caused Sainte-Beuve to write the translation. Then too, the poem is cited in a note to the Portrait of Mme de Staël; this would show clearly enough that it was very intimately connected with her in Sainte-Beuve's mind. Küchler says that it was probably because

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1. Pensées d'Août, Poésies Complètes II, 262.
2. "Nous avons cherché à en reproduire le sentiment (du poème de Schlegel) dans les stances suivantes, en supprimant toutefois l'histoire entière et détaillée de Rome qui fait le principal de la pièce allemande...; mais le ton général du début, et tout le mouvement de la fin qui se rapporte à Mme de Staël, ont été conservés,---." Portraits de femmes, I40, note.



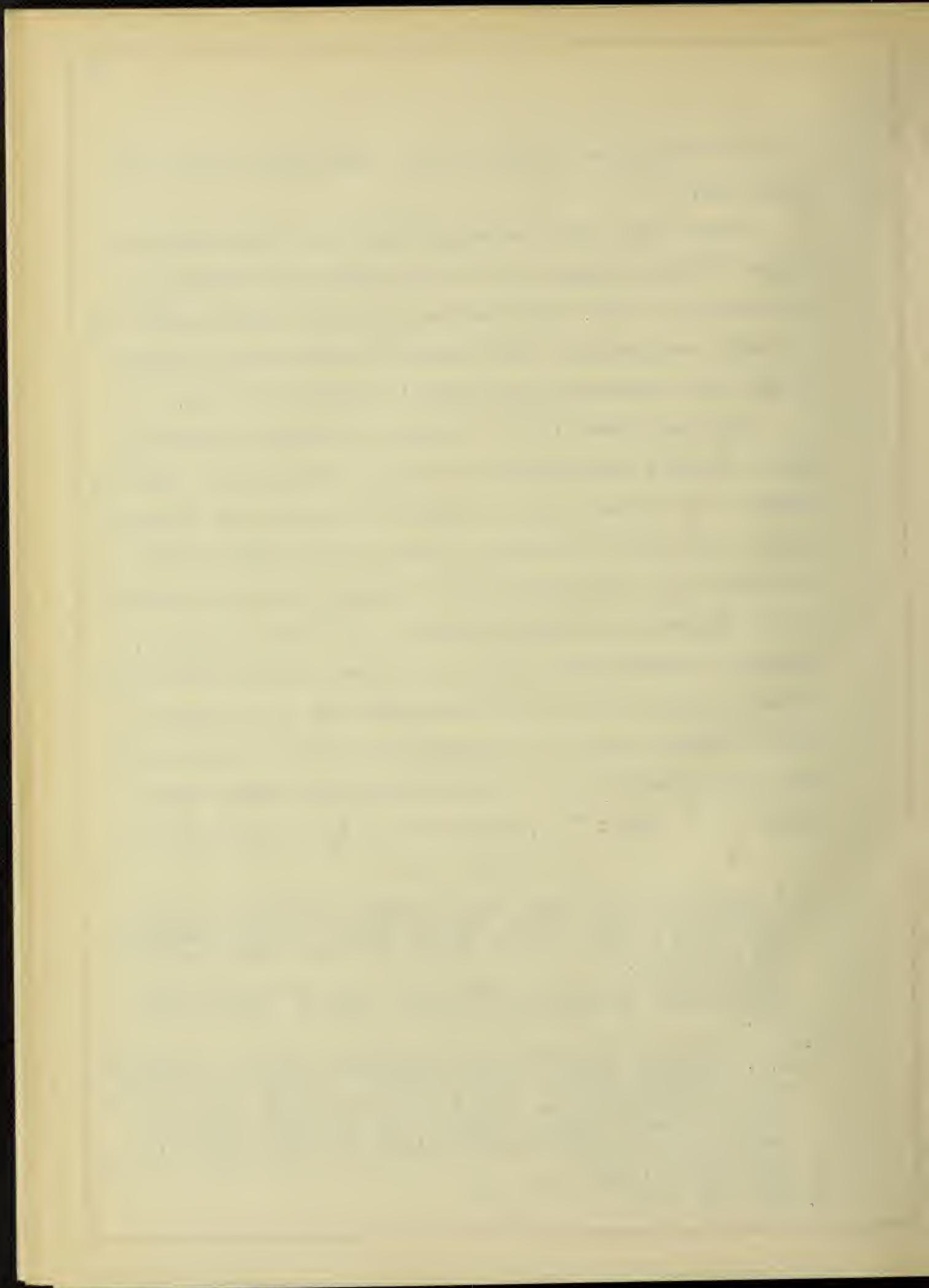
he was studying Mme de Staël at the time that he wrote the imitation. <sup>1</sup>

Sainte-Beuve had some acquaintance with other works of August Wilhelm Schlegel as he cites him fairly frequently. <sup>2</sup> In several of these citations Mme de Staël's name appears and it would seem probable that Schlegel's relations with Mme de Staël first attracted Sainte-Beuve's attention to him.

Only one other direct reference is given us concerning Mme de Staël's contribution of foreign literatures : " Mme de Staël et son école, tous ces esprits distingués qui concourent à introduire en France de justes notions des théâtres étrangers; qui les premiers nous expliquèrent ou nous traduisirent Shakespeare, Goethe, Schiller..." <sup>3</sup> This statement, however, becomes especially important when we consider Sainte-Beuve's decided interest in Shakespeare. He is referred to over a hundred times in the Lundis alone; Sainte-Beuve calls him " poète admirable et le plus naturel sans doute depuis Homère; " <sup>4</sup> says : " ... il a créé des êtres ravissants de

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1. " Ebenso zufällig, wohl weil er sich mit Madame de Staël beschäftigte, hat er das Gedicht August Wilhelm Schlegels, die Elegie "Rom", Frau von Staël gewidmet, kennen gelernt und übersetzt." Walther Küchler, Sainte-Beuve Studien, Zeitschrift für französische Sprache und Literatur, XXVIII, Erste Hälfte, 209.
2. He is cited thirty times in the Lundis. Also cf. " Auch von A.W. Schlegel, seinen tiefen Wissen und seiner religiösen Aufrichtigkeit spricht er mit Achtung, obwohl ihm seine ungünstigen Urteile über französische Literatur sehr wohl bekannt waren". Walther Küchler, Sainte-Beuve Studien, Zeitschrift für französische Sprache und Literatur, XXVIII, Erste Hälfte, 212.
3. Causeries du Lundi XIV, 71.
4. Ibid, XV, 366.



pureté et de douceur, et il habite au centre de la nature humaine;" <sup>1</sup> and further : " Shakespeare, à sa manière ( et sauf les défauts de son temps ) a été complet. " <sup>2</sup> An interesting comparison may be made of passages concerning Shakespeare in Mme de Staël's works, and corresponding ones in Sainte-Beuve. <sup>3</sup>

".... les Vies de Plutarque, que Shakespeare paraît avoir lues avec le plus grand soin ..." <sup>4</sup>

" N'avait-il (Shakespeare) pas lu Montaigne et Plutarque ? " <sup>5</sup>

" Il y a dans Shakespeare des beautés du premier genre, et de tous les pays comme de tous les temps, des défauts qui appartiennent à son siècle...." <sup>6</sup>

" Shakespeare, à sa manière ( et sauf les défauts de son temps), a été complet." <sup>7</sup>

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1. Causeries du Lundi XV, 367.

2. Ibid, 367.

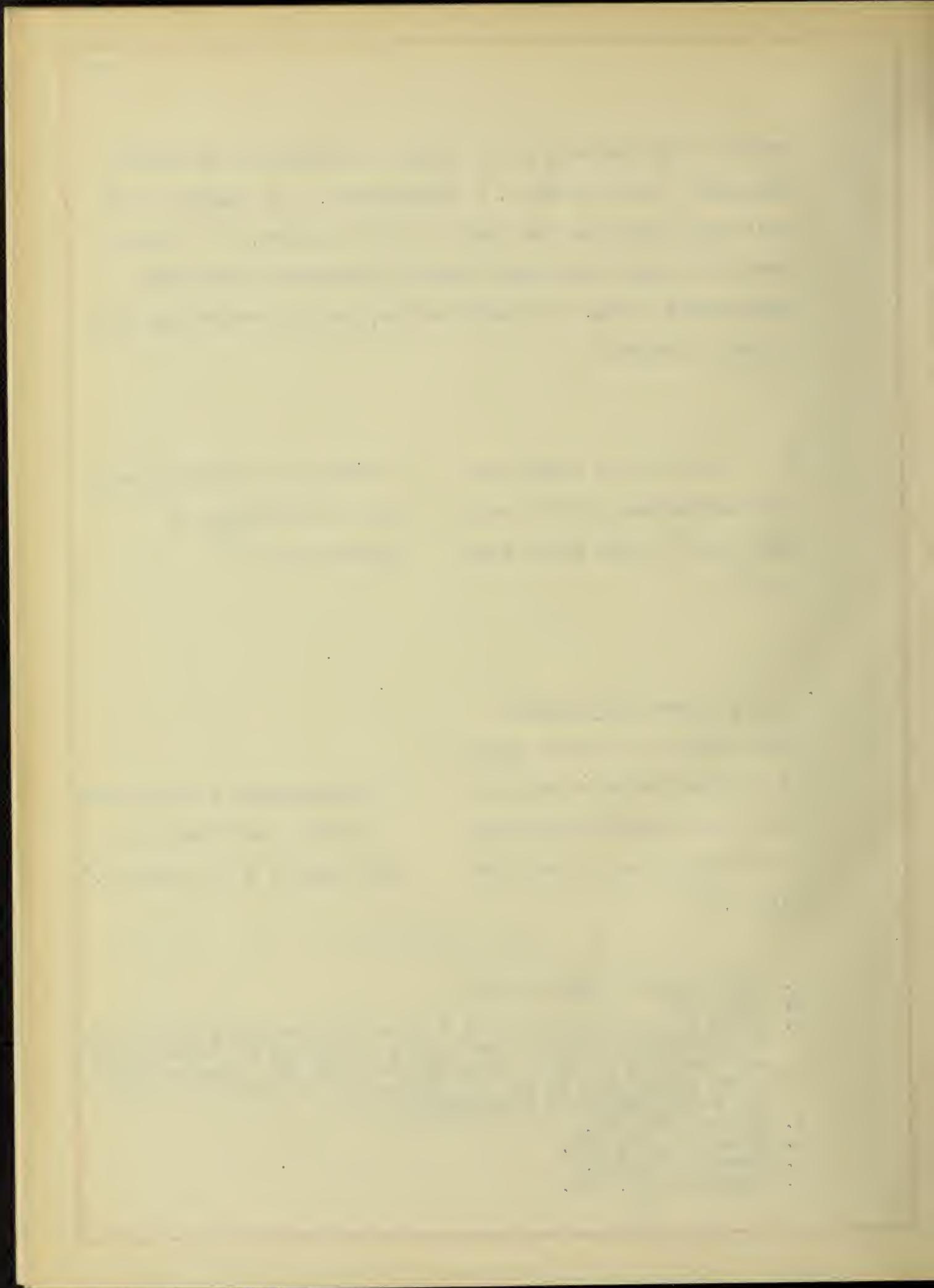
3. It is to be noted that all four of the passages cited from Sainte-Beuve occur in one single treatment of Shakespeare and that two of those from Mme de Staël are from two contiguous paragraphs of de la Littérature and two from a single paragraph of de l'Allemagne.

4. Oeuvres IV, 277.

5. Causeries XV, 366.

6. Oeuvres IV, 276.

7. Causeries XV, 367.



"... il ( Shakespeare ) possède encore plus la connaissance du cœur humain que celle du théâtre." <sup>1</sup>

" Shakespeare.... a peut-être.... une pénétration trop subtile pour le point de vue de la scène." <sup>3</sup>

" .... il ( Shakespeare ) habite au centre de la nature humaine." <sup>2</sup>

" Oh! ce n'est pas à vous qu'il faut dire que cet homme, si homme entre tous, n'était pas un sauvage..., qu'il ne faut pas le confondre ( parce qu'il a été parfois énergique ou subtil à l'excès...) avec les excentriques et les fous pleins d'eux-mêmes..." <sup>4</sup>

Sainte-Beuve was interested in Shakespeare; he acknowledges Mme de Staël as one of his initiators into his knowledge of Shakespeare and seems to have borrowed from her, ideas about him. It appears, consequently, that Mme de Staël's influence here is really significant.

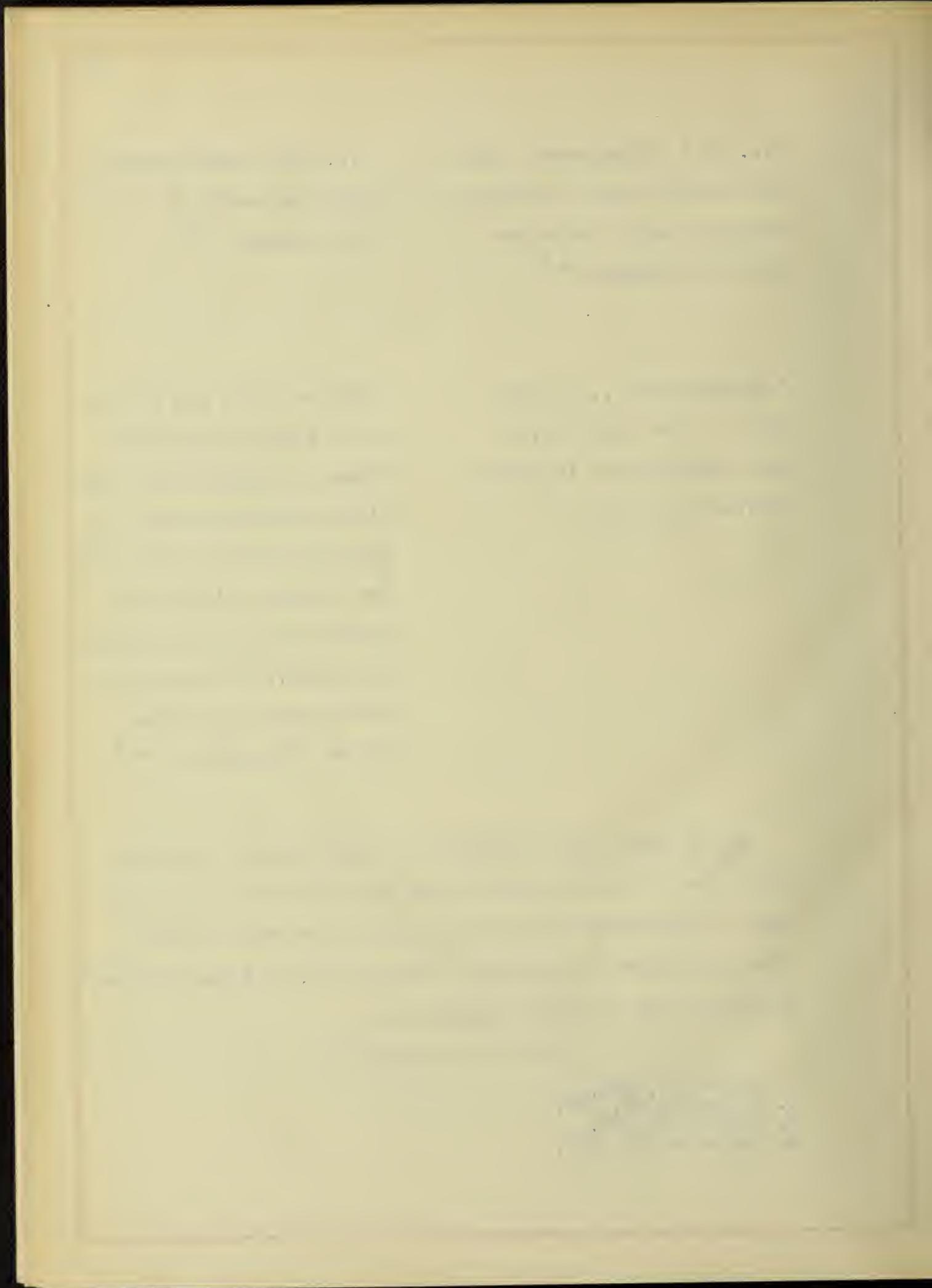
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1. Oeuvres X, 353.

2. Causeries XV, 367.

3. Oeuvres X, 352.

4. Causeries XV, 366.

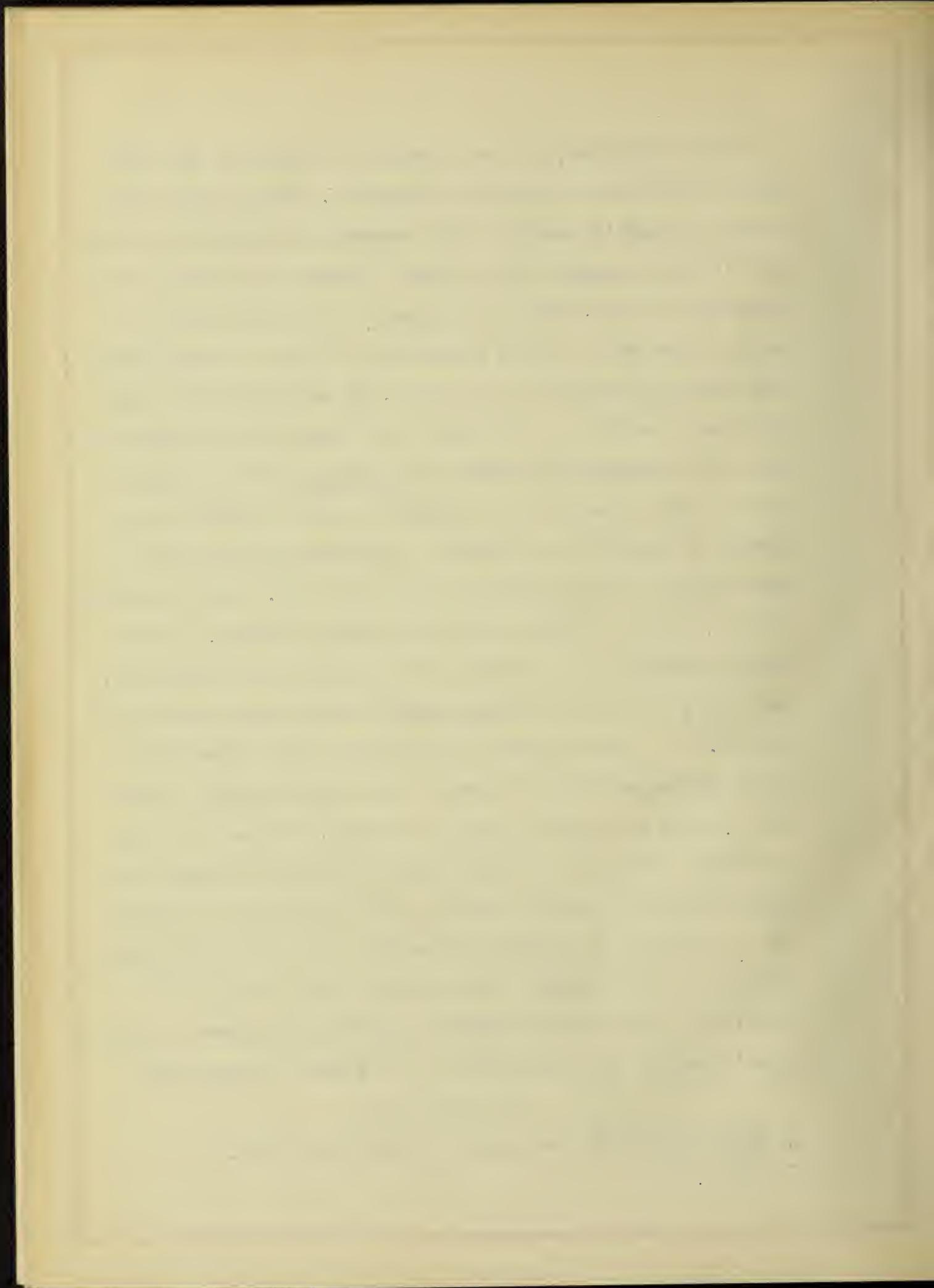


After the ideas, let us consider the style of our two authors. Here we have exact information. Sainte-Beuve says of Mme de Staël's manner: "En composant, me disait quelqu'un qui l'a bien connue, elle écrivait d'abord, elle jetait ses idées sur des chiffons, et ce premier brouillon, elle le montrait peu puis elle se recopiait, et dans ce second état, elle lisait quelquefois à des amis. Un secrétaire lui recopiait cela ensuite...; et alors elle lisait plus volontiers.. Enfin elle revoyait elle-même ses épreuves, et y changeait encore. Mais durant tout ce temps..... elle en était tout occupée et partout; elle amenait la conversation sur ces mêmes sujets qu'elle traitait dans son livre. Tout ce qu'elle voyait, tout ce qu'elle entendait chemin faisant, tout ce qu'elle disait,... y entrait d'une manière ou d'une autre. Son livre, en un mot, se conversait en même temps qu'il s'écrivait. "<sup>1</sup> And further, Sainte-Beuve cites Chênedollé : "Elle s'occupait de son ouvrage sur la Littérature, dont elle faisait un chapitre tous les matins. Elle mettait sur le tapis, à dîner, ou le soir dans le salon, l'argument du chapitre qu'elle voulait traiter, vous provoquait à causer sur ce texte-là, le parlait elle-même dans une rapide <sup>2</sup> improvisation; et le lendemain le chapitre était écrit. "

Levallois, one of Sainte-Beuve's secrétaries, gives us Sainte-Beuve's manner of composition : "Il aimait à causer ses

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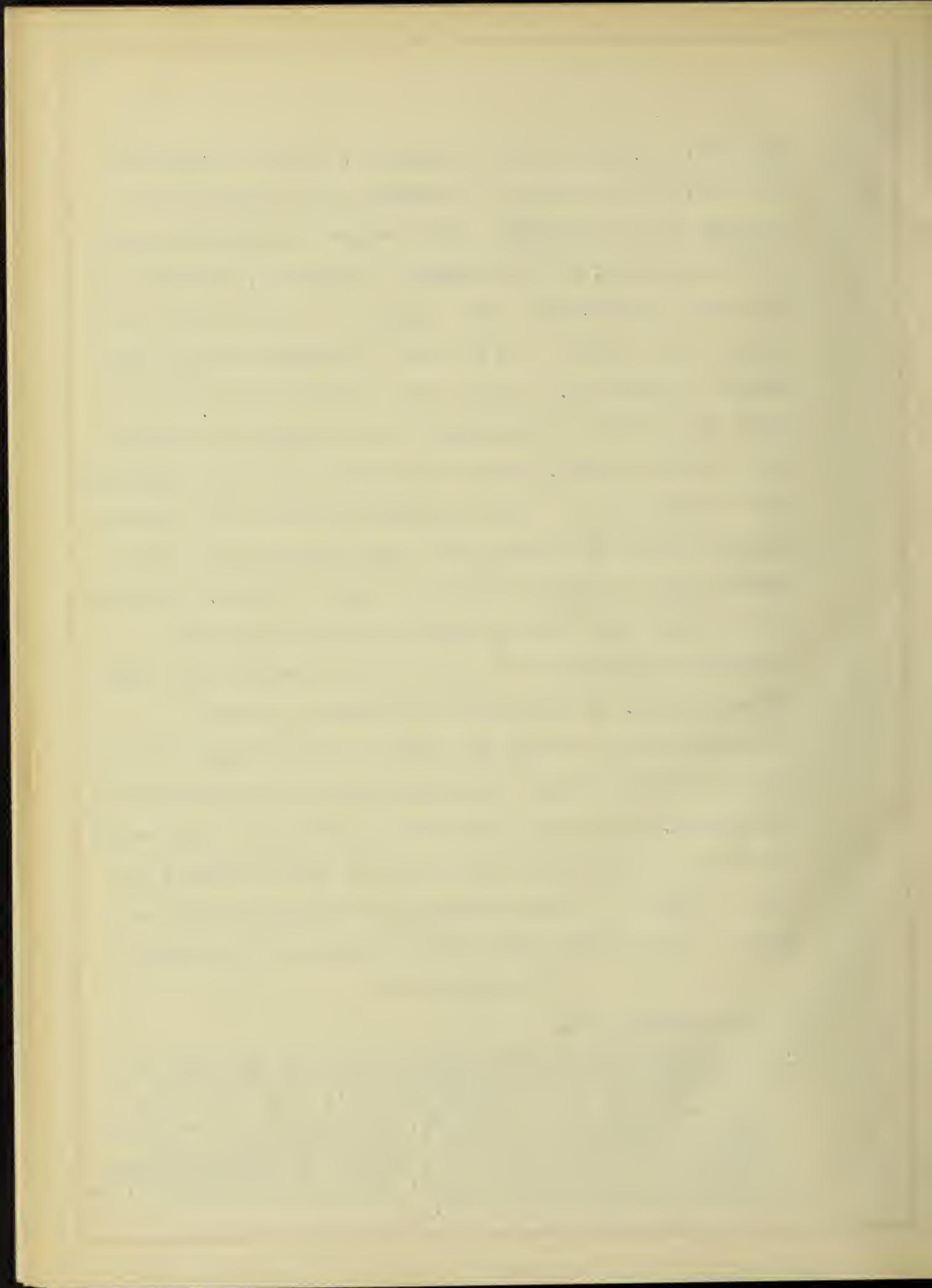
1. Chateaubriand et son groupe littéraire, I, 68.  
2. Ibid., 69.



articles. Le soir en nous promenant... il me les exposait avec feu, avec passion..... Pendant qu'il préparait sa Causerie ou son Portrait, Sainte-Beuve appartenait corps et âme au modèle. Il l'embrassait, l'épousait, l'exaltait."<sup>1</sup> The words " conversait " and " parlait " in the first citations, and " causer " in the last are emphasized by being written in italics. We must note also that it is Sainte-Beuve who has interested himself in this manner of composition of Mme de Staël. Each of our authors has been reproached for " improvisation " and this would indicate that they had a common method of writing. This does not mean that Sainte-Beuve's style is copied from that of Mme de Staël. He writes as he talks; Juste Olivier says his conversation had a " caractère saillant "<sup>2</sup> and his writings have this same characteristic. He was familiar with Mme de Staël's " conversational " method and admired her greatly; consequently he may very well have been confirmed in his procedure by her example. He also has indicated his theory of style which corresponds closely with his account of Mme de Staël's method. He says: " Il faut écrire le plus possible comme on parle...."<sup>3</sup> He also says as to his method of criticism :

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1. Sainte-Beuve, I76.
2. "M. Sainte-Beuve n'achève pas toujours ses phrases; je ne dirai pas qu'il les bredouille, mais il les jette, et il a l'air d'en être dégoûté et de n'y plus tenir déjà avant qu'elles soient achevées. Cela donne à sa conversation un caractère saillant." Cited by Séché in his introduction to Mme Bertrand's edition of Correspondance inédite de Sainte-Beuve avec M. et Mme Juste Olivier.p.10.
3. Cahiers de Sainte-Beuve, I2I.



" Ma manière et mon habitude pour l'analyse appliquée à la littérature et aux livres est celle-ci : prendre les choses et les recueillir tout proche de la conversation..." <sup>1</sup>

What direct statements have we of the general influence of Mme de Staël on Sainte-Beuve ? He himself gives us two :

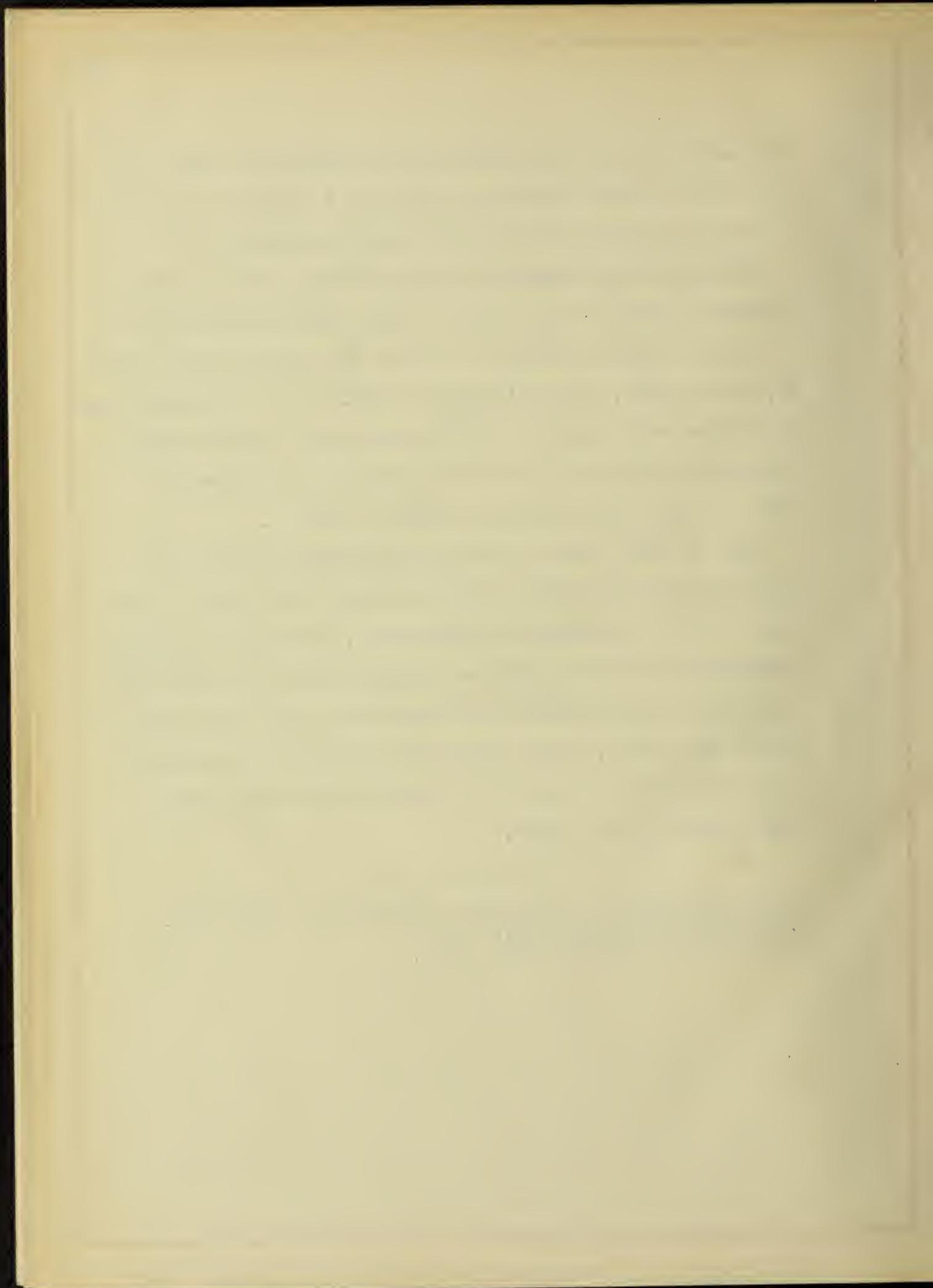
" ... elle ( Mme de Staël ) a été un des cultes de ma jeunesse, et ce culte, je ne l'ai pas abjuré.<sup>2</sup>" And : " Gardons-nous de défaire sans raison et d'aller gâter les justes admirations, les religions bien fondées de notre jeunesse." <sup>3</sup>

( He has just been speaking of Mme de Staël ).

Mme de Staël seems to have contributed materially to Sainte-Beuve's knowledge of German literature, and to some degree to his knowledge of Shakespeare. There is a striking resemblance in their manner of composition, but it would be hazardous to ascribe much influence here, and proof would be almost impossible. Sainte-Beuve's discipleship is indicated by two references in which he clearly states that Mme de Staël has been his leader.

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1. Chateaubriand et son groupe littéraire I, 234, note.
2. Nouveaux Lundis II, 291.
3. Portraits de femmes, 164, note.

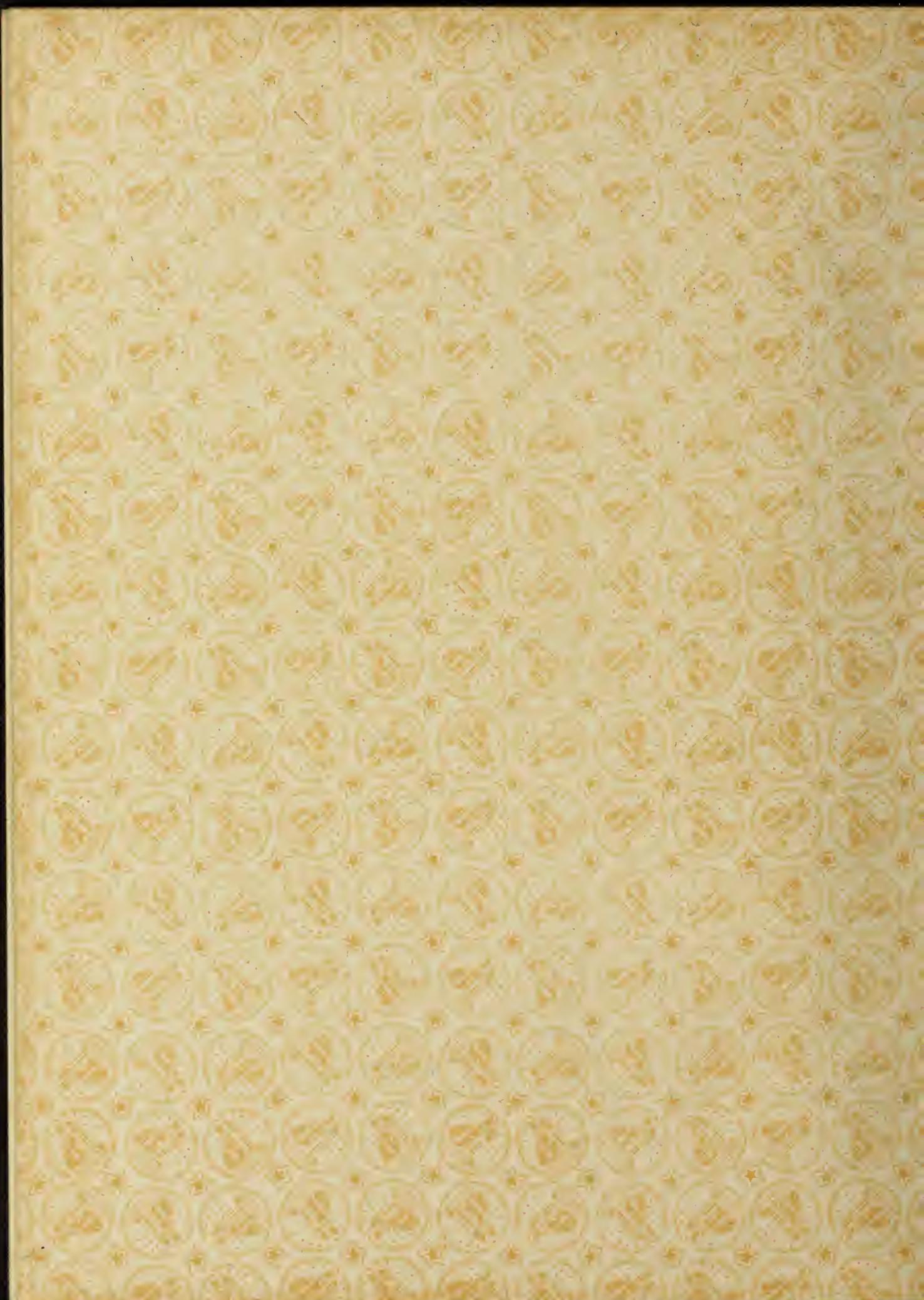


## CONCLUSION

What is the importance of Mme de Staël's influence on Sainte-Beuve's work ? It is difficult, one may almost say impossible, to determine the part one author plays in the work of another who comes later. " Quoi de plus délicat que la transmission littéraire ? " <sup>1</sup> says Sainte-Beuve. We can, however, indicate certain evidences of influence. Mme de Staël's theory of literature as the expression of society, when developed and enlarged, becomes Sainte-Beuve's method. Her works led to his study of German literature, and did much to give him a cosmopolitan point of view. Sainte-Beuve's manner of composition is very similar to Mme de Staël's, and probably influenced by it to some extent at least. The origin of his poem, Rome, seems to be found in his interest in her. He expresses his indebtedness to her by styling her a well-founded religion of his youth, and one of his cults which began early and remained with him throughout his life. It is clear, then, that Mme de Staël exerted an important influence upon Sainte-Beuve's methods and ideas.

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1. Chateaubriand et son groupe littéraire I, 24.





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